

RUSSIA'S NEIGHBOUR—
THE NEW POLAND

By the Same Author

NOVELS.

SPY
SECRET SERVANT
GERMAN SPY
THE CAVALRY WENT THROUGH
ARMOURED DOVES
HOSANNA
DEATH IN THE VALLEY
DEATH OF A HARLOT
THE MUSSOLINI MURDER PLOT
LADY DOCTOR—WOMAN SPY
DEATH UNDER GIBRALTAR
MAGINOT LINE MURDER
DEATH TO THE SPY
SIEGFRIED SPY
DEATH TO THE FIFTH COLUMN
SECRET WEAPON
BLACK MARKET
SECOND FRONT—FIRST SPY
SPY CATCHERS
THE SPY IN THE BROWN DERBY

TRAVEL BOOKS

ROUND ABOUT ANDORRA
IN THE TRAIL OF THE THREE MUSKETEERS
THE BLUE DANUBE
PEDALLING POLAND
ALBANIAN BACK DOOR
CYCLING IN FRANCE
I SAW SPAIN
RIDE TO RUSSIA
BALTIC ROUNDABOUT
SAVOY! CORSICA! TUNIS!

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(with I.O. Evans)
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ONE MAN'S YEAR

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

ALBANIAN JOURNEY

GENERAL

DANGER SPOTS OF EUROPE
SECRETS OF GERMAN ESPIONAGE
THE STORY OF POLAND
THE NEW EUROPE
AMERICAN JOURNEY
BALKAN BACKGROUND
BRITISH JOURNEY

RUSSIA'S NEIGHBOUR—
THE NEW POLAND

by

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CHAPTER ONE
WARSAW, 1945

I

THE AIRCRAFT CIRCLED OVER the shell of what had once been Warsaw, a city where men and women lived, loved and pursued happiness. From a thousand feet the gaunt ruins called houses looked like rows of decayed teeth with their fillings missing. I sought in vain for a roof.

The airfield was pock-marked with hastily-filled mine craters. Even as I jumped to the ground I was asked if I had an English newspaper. Then I had a welcome for which the adjective "warm" is a complete understatement.

The car moved along a rough *pavé* road. I met a company of Polish soldiers on the march: inevitably, they were singing. It used to be a proud boast in Poland that while German soldiers sang at the word of command, Polish soldiers sang without it.

A rattle of shots: a lorry halted abruptly. I saw men lifting the body of the driver from its cab. He had apparently ignored a police signal to stop, and they had promptly opened fire. I considered the method drastic—the man might not have seen or heard their signal. But it was good shooting—I counted eight bullet holes in the driver's body. I gathered from the police that he had good reasons for not wanting to halt.

The hotel at which I was deposited was the only one standing in Warsaw. It had been a German officers' club, so was spared until the last minute. Then the plans for destruction went wrong. All about was a maze of desolation.

So within ten minutes I had touched some of the keys to the Poland of September, 1945. The rapturous greeting to an Englishman represented the overwhelming desire of the Poles to re-establish their contacts with the West. The casual shooting revealed that the era of violence had not yet ended. The appalling destruction indicated the terrible plight of devastated Poland; but the singing of the troops on the march was symptomatic of the unbroken and unbreakable spirit of the Polish people.

There is no city in the world like Warsaw. Only Stalingrad could bear any comparison, and here the circumstances were different—the damage was caused by battle. Warsaw was battered in the siege of September, 1939, and further damaged in the rising of 1944; but the bulk of its devastation is deliberate.

The Germans fired and destroyed it street by street, house by house. Small wonder that from the aircraft I had seen no roof: there was none. I could well understand the anger of the Poles.

As I was booking my room, I heard a commotion in the street. I rushed outside: some people were cheering, others—men as well as women—unashamedly weeping; but some knelt on the pavement, their lips moving in a prayer. The cause of the excitement was a tram-car—very new, very red, and bedecked with garlands of flowers. It was being towed through the streets—the first of its kind to come to Warsaw since the great destruction. Once it had passed, I heard a great chatter of conversation—happy and excited, like that of children at a party. This tram-car was the swallow which heralds the summer. Normal life was about to return to Warsaw—slowly, maybe, but while man has hope he needs no other incentive to happiness. Despair was already banished from the city. Physically, it was a hulk: mentally and spiritually, it was vividly alive.

II

Days later I walked through the streets of Warsaw giving an airing to a little dog who belonged to a friend in the British Embassy. People gazed at us in curiosity and affection. I had to halt, so many wished to stoop and pat the dog. In a few minutes I was surrounded by a throng of people. Often it needs a little thing to draw attention to a big one. I realised suddenly that in the whole of Warsaw I had not seen a single dog or cat. They were all killed and eaten years earlier.

There was food in Poland by now. The Germans could blast the houses of Warsaw, but they could not destroy the vast Polish plain: the term "scorched earth" is a sentimental and emotional exaggeration. War has been too common in the life of the European peasant: he is resilient, and his simple village life recovers from a scourge far more rapidly than the artificial and circumscribed existence of the town. The harvest had been reasonably good; there was a shortage of meat and fats, but some foods were almost plentiful.

That is, for the moment. Principal difficulty was transport, denuded and destroyed by the war which had ravaged Poland. Distribution of supplies was very uneven, and the approaching winter would not make things easier. This failing led to monotony of diet in some districts, and strange paradoxes in others. In one peasant cottage I was offered refreshments: the woman of the house, wearing ancient rags, brought in coarse black bread—and a basket of peaches which would have fetched £10 or £15 in a London shop.

Trains were running again, spasmodically. The guard could offer no guarantee of departure at a particular hour or on a particular day. I boarded one of them from a siding—for the railway station of Warsaw is a demon's delight of savage devastation. About twenty people crowded into a compartment: children perched on the racks: men travelled on the buffers or on the roofs of the carriages—this position, they claimed, was more comfortable and healthier than the overcrowded compartment. I agreed, and climbed on to the roof: then got afraid of falling off as the train gathered speed and got down again. A chance acquaintance showed me a better way to travel—on a coal train. For a small present to the guard, I might ride third-class, on the lumpy coal: for a larger bribe, I might travel first-class on a truck of slack—much more comfortable, and well worth the extra money on a journey which might last two or three days.

Public transport in Warsaw disappeared in the early days of the war. The Government has allocated a few lorries, which carried incredible numbers of congested people, yet found room for more active spirits who clambered up the back. The autobus and tramway were for the most part replaced by peasant carts—long and lean, tough and springless, with planks down the side or across the middle. Peasant drivers shouted their destinations at street corners, and earned sums beyond their wildest dreams by driving weary people from one end of a dead city to the other. They could offer neither comfort or speed, but there are times when people will pay hard-earned money for movement.

A few *droshkies* were available for folk who were in or near the millionaire class. For humbler people there was a fair supply of taxis—not motor cars, of course, but tricycles: a seat for two was fitted in the front, and a cyclist pedalled furiously at the back. He could see his way ahead only with difficulty: I witnessed many accidents, and marvelled that there were not more.

At each street corner was a girl soldier, rifle slung across her back, regulating the traffic efficiently. In some streets the surface had been completely cleared, while in others the path wound irregularly between piles of rubble. Progress involved an awkward dilemma. If I walked down the middle of the street, I stood a good chance of being knocked down by a cycle-taxi driver who could not see where he was going because of the heads of his passengers. If the road boasted a pavement, and I used it, I stood an even better chance of being killed by falling masonry. This was the fate of over 200 citizens of Warsaw every week, six months after the Germans had left the city.

Warsaw once housed a million and a half people: the war reduced this figure to 200,000 and even by September, 1945, there

were only 400,000. Most of these lived in the suburb of Praga, across the river, but I encountered hundreds of families in cellars beneath their shattered homes—or even on the ground floor, with a temporary roof ingeniously if insecurely attached to the blackened walls. It was not life, but an animal existence. In no civilised country would a dog be assigned such quarters, but war in its consequences knows neither ethical ideas or standards of decency. When I commiserated with the unfortunate people, they laughed away my dull words: this was their home—there were others worse off.

III

How did they live, these people of Warsaw, who had no city left? Without houses or factories, with public amenities limited to a water tap in every street, with all their possessions looted or destroyed—how did these people live?

This sounds a simple question, but its answer demanded persistent investigation. "Oh, we manage somehow," was their invariable reply. It was not enough. I knew that the Germans had started off a wild inflation, printing zloty notes by the thousand million. Now money had little meaning, and was worthless as a guide to comparative value. I saw chocolate on the stalls, but at the official rate of exchange for the zloty it cost 15s. a bar—and even at the Black Market exchange rate the price was 7s. 6d. A man offered to sell me a cheap, much used bicycle for £60. Its front wheel lacked a tyre and was being ridden on the rims—hence the low price. A meal at the one hotel in Warsaw made a big hole in a pound, and sometimes broke into a second. Yet, after my first meal had cost me 350 zloty, the engine-driver I encountered an hour later told me that his wages were 300 zloty a week. How did he live? "Oh, we manage somehow."

He did not tell me the whole of the story: nor did the next man, nor the next. It was not that they were secretive—this is no Polish failing—but that they did not wish to burden me with their troubles.

Faced with an almost complete lack of consumer goods and a hopelessly inflated currency, the Polish Government had to take drastic action. The usual method is to raise wages so as to cover the cost of living: the Poles decided to stabilise wages and to bring down the cost of living. If their plan succeeds, it will be a fitting result to a heroic decision, for it was bound to be a long process, and in that time the hardship involved will be considerable. Further, it was not evenly spread, and some people had to carry a much heavier burden than others.

A man employed in a factory would receive about 300 zloty

a week, a trivial sum in spending power—say, about 15s. a week. In addition, however, he got two meals a day at his work; his children got meals at school, and his wife, if she worked outside the home, would get meals too. This food was more important than money. Then he would get a ration card, entitling him to rye bread, meat and butter with milk for the children at fixed and low rates. The ration card did not entitle him to fixed quantities each week, but only to a share of what was available. Even with these official aids, Poles confessed to me reluctantly that it was quite impossible for a man to live honestly on his wages.

Thus at least one member of the family had to engage in trade—either selling family possessions, if any remained, or buying and selling loot from Eastern Germany. This was the least satisfactory feature of Warsaw: far too many people were engaged in taking in each other's washing, and much of the washing was not honestly acquired. A new class of profiteer had appeared, far more obnoxious than the merchant whose transactions were ruled by the much-abused "profit motive," but who was often content with a reasonable profit. The new class, with no mercantile tradition, sought only to make money very quickly.

Even more painful than the physical distress was the mental demoralisation. For five years it had been patriotic for these people to cheat and rob and kill Germans, and the engrained habits could not be abandoned at will, even if the will were present. This is a subject to which we must return more than once.

"How do you live?" was my continuous question.

"My pay keeps me and my family for about ten days in the month," said a civil servant. "After that, we have only the official meals, nothing else. So far we have lived by selling what remained of our possessions, but we are near the end of them. We dread the winter—my wife has no underclothes at all, and this is my only suit: you will notice that it is made of cotton. Yes, I am afraid that some of my colleagues do bring up their salaries to a living wage by accepting bribes. That is a great pity, for it strikes at the root of society. I have no complaints—after all, this is heaven compared with a year ago. We shall manage somehow."

One day I waited for a Ministry car. When it arrived, more than an hour late, the driver admitted that he had been doing a few jobs of his own on the way—with the Ministry car and petrol!

"What would you?" he demanded. "I get 300 zloty a week—a man can't live on that."

"Why don't they raise your wages?"

"They can't," he defended. "They couldn't pay me more than the Minister himself gets."

"How do I live?" said a workman. "I've never been so well off in my life. I'm a bricklayer, and I haven't taken a Government job—I'm on my own. I make about 600 zloty *a day*. A man can do pretty well on that, even with prices as they are. I don't get Government meals of black bread and vegetable stew: I eat white bread and meat every day."

I have suggested that the zloty was worth about a halfpenny, but no criterion of prices could be applied. The price for a watch was fantastic, but combs were cheaper than in England—and much more plentiful.

"My brother and I are partners," said a man who spread his wares on a pile of rubble. "He fetches the stuff, and I sell it. He goes to Germany, and buys it from the Russians. He is stronger than I am, and strength is necessary, for it is very fatiguing getting the stuff home. Sometimes he is robbed on the way. The risks are so great that I have to charge high prices for the goods, but when people need them so badly they must pay. We make about 5,000 zloty a week between us—sometimes more."

I suspected that the "sometimes" should have been "often." I mused sadly on the course of human injustice, which gave greater rewards to the undeserving. Yet my optimism was restored by other contacts.

My wife had sent a woollen dress length to a friend. Her first comment was not about the quality of the material or its pattern, but: "How happy I shall be in a frock which was not stolen!"

And a man who had lost his hand, home and possessions: "Yes, it is hard, but it is for Poland."

One acquaintance set me a poser. He was so obviously in a morning-after state that I thought that he must be prosperous.

"No, I have nothing, and want nothing," he corrected. "The Germans blew up my house and killed my two sisters. You have seen the official notices on the walls? They tell when the Council is going to start the clearance of a street, so that people can come and claim their dead."

"When the turn of my street approached, I got ready. I sold everything left to me, and bought two metal coffins, for I felt that my sisters must have decent burial. But when they cleared the rubble from my house, they could not find my sisters. So I stored the two metal coffins in a garage; they were my only remaining possessions. Then somebody broke in and stole them, and I had nothing left. So I met some friends and got drunk. What else could I do?"

This was the poser.

Warsaw was a proud city; its buildings and streets could have graced any capital in Western Europe. They ranged from historic castles to modern edifices of the skyscraper pattern.

Now all lies in ruins. The Royal Palace, once a picture of modest dignity, is a shambles of rubble. All about it is the most complete desolation even of this martyred city. Not even the hardiest can find so much as a cellar wherein to exist.

I passed by a stone plinth where once stood a famous statue. In the dark days of subjection to the Russian Tsars, the poet Adam Mickiewicz helped to sustain the Polish spirit. Reluctantly the Tzar gave permission for a monument to be erected in his memory. The unveiling was a remarkable scene. The Russian Governor knocked down rows of houses so that his artillery might command the huge crowd. There were to be no speeches—not even a verse of the poet's work could be recited.

So Henryk Sienkiewicz, author of *Quo Vadis*, obeyed the regulations implicitly. He held aloft the notes of what would have been his speech, then pulled the cords which released the swathings of the statue. The Russians stood to their guns, but the silence was intense: then it was broken by a woman's sob. The infection spread, and hundreds of thousands of eyes were wet with tears. The Russians never understood the Polish spirit, for such scenes were recalled years after a formal ceremony would have been forgotten.

The Cathedral is a ruin, but there was worse to come. Favourite among my corners of Warsaw was the Stare Miasto, the old town; an open space which used to be the market place of the city. The Town Hall, in its centre, fell a victim long ago to the ancient enemy, fire, but the flanking buildings remained, a blaze of colour. By their frontage could be gauged the status of their owners—a merchant might have a frontage of two windows, a noble three, a prince four. The houses were of substantial size and great dignity, but their feature was the gaily-painted external walls, in intricate designs. At night, especially, by the dim light of its ancient lanterns, the Stare Miasto was a place of dreams.

Now it is a hideous pile of bricks. I thought that I knew it well, but could scarcely reconstruct even its shape. Every house is an empty shell: only two or three retain more than a few square yards of the frontages which had attracted artists from all over the world. Once, by day, this was a scene of activity: now I stood for an hour, alone, inexpressibly sad. The place reeked of death.

Over one-quarter of the population of Warsaw was Jewish. In

olden days the Jews lived in their own quarter, the Ghetto. In recent times many of them had prospered, and you would find Jews in every corner of the city, but their poorer brethren clung obstinately to the Ghetto.

It was not a pleasant place—a maze of narrow alleys, unsavoury and insanitary, with tenement houses grossly overcrowded. Its people held fiercely to their religion: the youths were unshaven, the men amply bearded; all wore the traditional long black coat and round black hat with a tiny peak. In London you may pass by Jew and Gentile and never know which is which, but in Warsaw the Jew was distinctive—sometimes a Biblical figure of dignity, sometimes not so pleasing. He was encountered every few yards: now I recalled that I had not yet seen a Jew. From the Stare Miasto I clambered over heaps of bricks—there was no need to follow streets: once sure of my direction, I could move almost in a straight line.

When Hitler marched into Poland, the Jews must have known their fate. The Ghetto at Warsaw was bricked in by a high wall: sparse supplies of food were handed in, as to lepers. Dying by the thousand of slow starvation, the desperate Jews rose in revolt in 1943. They were annihilated, but at least it was a more merciful death. Then German engineers destroyed the Ghetto. I stood by the enclosing wall, and recoiled. The sight was incredible. The maze of streets had disappeared: in its place was an undulating pile of rubble, nearly a square mile in extent. Not even an atomic bomb could produce such a scene of savage devastation.

Shocked at the horror of man's blind revenge, I walked slowly around the perimeter walls. Then I saw my first Jew: his face was drawn and his long beard almost white. Tears were streaming down his cheeks.

As we talked, I led him away. At last I said: "Why do you come here? To torture yourself?"

"I must. All I had lies buried here. Tens of thousands of my people lie mangled beneath these ruins."

"You were here?" I asked, gently.

"I was here. I was young, and survived."

He caught my glance at his grey-white beard. "When the war began, I was twenty-five," he said. "I had a wife and two children, and parents. Now I am alone, and an old man—after six years. Our people have suffered throughout history, but never like this."

V

One end of Warsaw in September, 1945, was nothing more than a vast Caledonian Market. Every shop had been destroyed,

and not more than a few dozen had yet been reconstructed. The rest of the city's commerce was conducted out of doors.

A pile of rubble or broken paving stones served as a stall; a board or a battered suitcase formed the basis of the publicity display. Sometimes the merchant would exhibit supplies of a single article. White bread was available in ample quantity at 20 zloty per kilogramme—the controlled price of black bread was only 1 zloty per kilogramme, but Polish townspeople never pretended to like black bread. There was no arrangement in the market—it had just grown, haphazard. Next to a hutch which was an effective if insanitary butcher's shop I saw a stall from which dangled rows of gaily-coloured brassières. There were few human requirements which could not be purchased—at a price.

These were the professional efforts. Mingled with them, irregularly, were the amateur salesmen—or, more usually, saleswomen. Their brave faces hid many a tragedy. I saw one good-looking girl holding out a fine set of chessmen, and would have loved to hear why it had to be sold, but I could not add to the abasement of her pride. Her old father must live, even if he parted with his most precious possession. I cursed that the pound had so little value, otherwise at least I might have given her a decent price for the chessmen, instead of leaving her to the mercies of the profiteers—no “capitalists” or “financiers,” but men of humble stock who would not hesitate to gain by her necessity.

(At the official rate of exchange, the pound is worth 4 dollars: in the Warsaw market, only 2. The dollar has always been highly esteemed in Poland—there were so many Polish emigrants in U.S.A. who sent remittances home, and it was not uncommon to find peasants who kept their savings in the more stable dollar rather than the once-precarious zloty. The pound is but little known, and until British exports are available without limit, its purchasing value is circumscribed.)

There were women who held out a pathetic garment: or, more appealing, a child's toy. So obviously had each one a story to tell, yet I dare not ask for it; some ordinary human decency restraining me.

A few Russian soldiers wandered among the crowd, completely ignored by the Poles. Women and children passed along the street, carrying the bowls of soup which were their official issue. The professional vendors called their wares, the amateurs standing silent in their pride.

Here, spread over yards of derelict ground, was a hardware store—an expanse of oddments of ironmongery, mostly approaching the junk grade. I wondered what the man did with his motley

collection at night, and went back to see. He covered up his stock with dilapidated sheets of corrugated iron, and slept on top of them. Close by was a trifling shack which a cave-man would have scorned, but the man who lived there was a skilled engineer, and operated a simple lathe in the open close by.

No one who has not seen for himself can appreciate life in a city where all is lost. Bomb damage in Britain was hard enough to bear: yet it meant that a few streets of houses were destroyed, their inhabitants being crowded in with their neighbours. In Warsaw a man had no neighbours, for every house was destroyed.

Yet, in spite of blows which no other civilised place ever suffered, Warsaw was no dead city. On the contrary, it was vividly alive. Its bricks and stones were blasted, but the spirit of its people was unconquerable. My first glance at Warsaw was like a blow, so violent and universal was the destruction. Then my gaze strayed from the broken walls to the smiling faces of the people. There was no suggestion of despair: instead, an obvious determination to begin again.

At every street corner, on the pavement, in the shelter of some gaunt ruin which had once been a house, was a flower stall. The bright colours of the autumn flowers showed up vividly against the dull mass of debris in the background. That was so typical of the Poles—flower stalls in the middle of devastation, when the sheerly practical man would have insisted that every penny and every effort should have been concentrated on material things. A woman halted: her shoes consisted of canvas slats tied on to her feet with tape: her frock was patched and threadbare. She counted over her precious store of zloty: maybe she ought to have bought bread, but instead she bought flowers. What the body lost in sustenance, the mind gained in vigour. The uglier the surroundings, the more vital is the influence of beauty.

She smiled as she walked away, pressing her lips to the flowers as to the brow of a child.

VI

The Polish Government consisted largely of Communists, but they were determined to avoid the errors made by Soviet Russia. First of these was the adoption of the policy of isolation: there may have been good reasons for it, but in the long run it hurt Russia more than it did anybody else.

Poland's cultural leanings had always been to the West: the war had snapped them, to the great sorrow of the Poles. Now the Government took advantage of the establishment of a direct air service between London and Warsaw, and invited a small delegation to visit Poland. There were many initial difficulties, for at first the Russians refused us permission to fly over their

zone of occupied Germany. Eventually this was arranged, and we arrived in Warsaw only ten days late.

One of my companions was Storm Jameson: more than a distinguished novelist, she had been president of the English P.E.N., the writer's international; and her sympathetic personality had an instantaneous and moving effect on the emotional Poles; Val Gielgud, Dramatic Director of the B.B.C., was to renew contact with Polish radio; David Cleghorn Thomson, of British Films, proposed to examine the ideas of Polish studios: Mrs. Cecil Chesterton was to study social conditions. My own aim was to see the new Poland, and especially to visit the newly-allocated Western Provinces. The idea was that we should travel together to Cracow, where I would leave the others to their cultural activities while I set off on my explorations.

On our last day in Warsaw, I walked the length of the city with Val Gielgud. We were hurrying, for it was scarcely safe to be out after dark. Russian discipline had relapsed, and there were hold-ups and shootings every night.

We passed through street after street of demolished houses, where scarcely a rat could find a home. Burnt-out German tanks, trams and lorries which had once formed a barricade, the pock-marks of bullets on any wall still erect, bore witness to the severity of the fighting when the people of Warsaw rose to expel the invader. Unconsciously we slowed our pace, as if we walked through a cemetery. Here men and women had fought and died; these jagged fragments of brick were, only a short year earlier, the homes of people like ourselves. The setting sun, a brilliant crimson, gave a soft effect of lighting to the ruins—by day they are over-blattantly new and distressing, but now they seemed to age, and to gain in dignity and grandeur. We met only a young man and his girl. They, too, were hurrying, but halted occasionally; a kiss and a whisper of love were worth all the risks of highwaymen: it is probable that they possessed nothing worth looting, anyway, and no one could rob them of their love.

We reached an open place in the centre of the city. On one side it was flanked by the Saxon Gardens, once a very pleasant park—and it will be again, for I saw women gardeners vigorously attacking the weeds which disfigured the paths. Near to the entrance to the park was the tomb of Poland's Unknown Soldier, once nobly sited beneath a dignified colonnade, now reduced to half a dozen broken pillars: even the stone of the Warrior's tomb had been smashed by the vandals who stopped at nothing in their revenge, and who revered only their own ancient gods.

The other three sides of the square were framed by the gaunt hulks of devastated buildings: one had been the Foreign Office, a princely house of beauty and historic interest, now an ugly

heap of rubble. This was the Pilsudski Square. Once it was the site of a Russian cathedral, which dominated Warsaw with its bulbous domes. To the Poles it was a symbol of oppression, and when Poland regained its freedom after the First World War it was demolished.

Val Gielgud halted abruptly.

"I remember being on this spot in 1920," he said. "You remember the situation? Russia and Poland were at war. After initial successes, the Poles were driven back in headlong retreat and the Russians advanced to the gates of Warsaw. A more logical people would have accepted defeat, but the Polish spirit thrives on the despairing fight against odds. I saw the Polish army marching out to the battle which would decide the fate of its country. Most of the men were of General Haller's corps, which had fought so gallantly in the west, but some were Poles who had been conscripted into the German Army. A more motley collection I never saw: there were men in British khaki, French horizon blue, Italian green, German field grey and Russian grey as well. At their head rode three trumpeters—in the uniform of the Polish Lancers of 1830! General Haller took the salute on the steps of the Russian Cathedral. The street was packed with people, but they did not cheer the men who were marching to fight to the death: they knelt down, and prayed, and cried."

As we hurried on, to escape the early looters, I realised that in that dramatic hour Gielgud had experienced a remarkable epitome of Polish history—the varied uniforms, symbolic of the Partitions of Poland; the motley army, hastily called together from all quarters, typical of the Polish capacity for improvisation; the trumpeters, picturesque reminders of the romantic story of Poland; the Orthodox cathedral, monument of the long years of Russian oppression; and the people who did not cheer, but prayed and cried, thereby revealing themselves as Poles.

We shall return to Warsaw again, but first it is essential to glance at Poland's chequered story. Why did that tattered army march against the Russian invaders? And what happened after the victory had been won? A hundred questions demand an answer before we return to the woman of Warsaw who bought flowers instead of food. No race in Europe is more conscious of its history than the Poles: in none are ancient ideas, loves and prejudices more vividly remembered. It is quite impossible to understand the Poland of to-day without a glance at Poland yesterday. An Englishman of 1700 or 1800, returning to life, would survey with helpless amazement the complexities of the European scene: a Pole of the same period would be quite at home, for the main problems affecting the survival of his country have scarcely changed with the passing of the years.

The Polish habit of living with history can be very irritating. English and Americans, when arguing with an Irishman about current problems, discover that he has a disturbing habit of slipping back to Oliver Cromwell, whose connection with the affairs of our day is not always apparent. But it is impossible to see the Irish point of view unless we are prepared to go back to Oliver Cromwell. So it is with the Poles. Nor is this the only comparison which could be made between Poland and Ireland, two firmly Catholic peoples for long ruled by foreigners. The similarity in their histories has tended to create resemblances in their national characters. Yet the sufferings of the Poles have been far more severe, and to-day the happy-go-lucky fecklessness of the Irish is seldom encountered in Poland.

Paderewski, the great pianist who became the first Prime Minister of the reborn Poland in 1919, had a favourite story. A professor at a cosmopolitan university set his students a subject for a thesis: the general title was "The Elephant." An English student produced an essay headed: "The Elephant, and how to Hunt Him." A Frenchman titled his effort, "The Love Life of the Elephant." A German, after laborious research, produced a lengthy disquisition, "An Introduction to the Preliminary Study of the Gastronomical Possibilities of the Elephant." A Russian, after smoking endless cigarettes, submitted the startling caption, "The Elephant—does it Exist?" And a Pole headed his thesis, "The Elephant and the Polish Question."

He was justified. For two centuries the problem of Poland has held a dominating position in the disturbed medley of European affairs. The man who claimed that the problem was finally solved would be not bold, but rash.

THE OLD POLAND

I

THE POLES ARE A SLAV TRIBE, akin to the Russians, Czechs, Serbs, Croats and Bulgars. Their first known area of settlement was between the rivers Vistula and Oder. In its early stages their organisation was purely tribal, but by 1025 they had a king, Boleslas. A generation earlier Christianity had come to the country, and in the direction whence it came is to be found one of the root causes of the Polish problem to-day. While Russia was evangelised from Constantinople, and was organised under the Orthodox Church, Poland accepted Christianity from Rome, and was thus brought into intimate contact with the culture and thought of the West. This cleavage, lasting a thousand years, is of fundamental importance to-day. The first clash between Poles and Russians was that of ideas.

For centuries Poland was the eastern outpost of Western civilisation. On her soil were halted the hordes of barbarians pressing from the East. She accepted it as her historic mission to act as the vanguard of Christendom against pagan invaders.

When the Tartars had been finally beaten off, a new danger threatened Poland. In Germany a military order had been formed for service in the Crusades, the Order of Teutonic Knights. But Palestine was far away, and involved a long and uncomfortable journey: nearer home, in the Eastern Baltic, were pagan tribes obviously in need of missionary activity. The method was simple: all the natives who would not accept Christianity were slaughtered: those who did became serfs of the Knights, who established themselves as feudal barons. Prussia was the principal stronghold of the Knights, and from the local population the Teutons stole everything, including their name.

It was a weak Polish prince who invited the new scourge—he asked the aid of the Knights against some of his pagan neighbours. Now began a series of raids into Polish lands, for the Teutonic Knights had become little more than organised brigands. There is good ground for comparison between the Knights and the Nazis. Both started off with high-sounding ideals, maintained with religious fervour; both degenerated into bands of unscrupulous opportunists intent on their own aggrandisement.

Not until 1410 were the incursions of the Teutonic Knights halted. Then, on the field of Tannenberg, their armies were decisively defeated. Despite their efforts, the Knights were never able to regain their old position of dominance on the Southern Baltic shores. A hundred and fifteen years after Tannenberg the Order was dissolved. Its Grand Master proclaimed himself hereditary Duke of East Prussia: he did feudal homage to the



King of Poland for his duchy, and as his insignia received an eagle akin to that of Poland, but black instead of white. His name was Albert of Hohenzollern, and among his descendants was the last Kaiser of Germany.

By this time Poland had become united with Lithuania, when in 1386 the Polish princess Jadwiga married the Lithuanian Jagiello. At that time the Lithuanians ruled a considerable

empire: they were doughty warriors, and easily imposed their will on the loosely-knit Russian tribes. The Lithuanian domains stretched as far to the East as Kiev and the River Dnieper.

The next 200 years were the golden age of Poland: the country was at her height of power, fame and culture. Neighbouring states voluntarily sought her protection, for her reputation was liberal—throughout the long religious wars which devastated the rest of Europe, for example, Poland was at peace. By the end of the sixteenth century, Poland was the largest state in Europe.

II

A passing glance at the social structure of Poland at this period would be useful, for the Jagiellonian age in Poland left its effects in succeeding centuries even more strongly than that of the contemporary Tudor period in England.

The Polish magnate lived in princely state, equivalent to that of a British duke or earl. He had a palace in the capital, and more than one country estate. Ostentation was the fashion of the day, and feudal habits lingered: the powerful Radziwill family employed 20,000 retainers. The system was patriarchal: the great lord regarded himself as the head of a family. All could look to him for aid and protection—his serfs as well as his blood relatives. What we now call social services depended entirely on his generosity, and their standard was often high. Indeed, the Polish magnate of the period can at least stand comparison with any of his European contemporaries.

The second class of Polish society was even more important than that of the great lords, and was far more numerous; this was the *Szlachta*, the gentry. They have been called a "democratic nobility." Every member of a noble family, however distant from its main tree, was classed as noble. A king would knight a man for valour in battle, and give him an estate. On his death, it would be divided between his sons: thus, after a few generations, it might consist of dozens of peasant farms—but their owners could all claim that they belonged to the *Szlachta*. Wealth did not affect the issue at all: "The lord is a rich gentleman, and the gentleman a poor lord." Tens of thousands of Polish peasants to-day are of *Szlachta* ancestry.

The lords and the gentry alone had any political power: by modern standards this sounds the reverse of democratic, but the Polish *Szlachta* were so numerous that they numbered five per cent of the population at a time when only 2 per cent of the people of England had the right to vote. The cultural influence of the gentry was considerable, but by their very nature they were conservative, and resisted the reforming waves of social

advance for the common people which spread from Western Europe. Nevertheless, many of their ideas on subjects like honour and trust and freedom have profoundly affected Polish thought and history.

The most numerous of the Polish social classes was the peasant. His lot was often miserable: he was tied to the land of his lord. Usually he was allocated a small holding of his own, but had to give a number of days' service each year to his master, who also took a share of his crops—for which, however, he provided seed, farm stock and implements, and a cottage.

The social gap between the peasant and landlord led to one development—the power of the priest. He lived among the peasants, but was generally of *Szlachta* stock: he served as a link between the two classes.

Considering the long years of his submergence, the modern advance of the Polish peasant is remarkable. He is the backbone of the Polish race: he has survived wars and pestilences, tyranny and revolution. He has triumphed over every disability which man and Nature could lay in his path. To-day his worth is recognised, and many of Poland's leaders are drawn from peasant stock.

The fourth class in Poland was an ethnic curiosity. The nobles were not permitted by their traditions to engage in commerce: the peasants were forbidden to do so—their task was exclusively agrarian. Thus a mercantile class was imported from abroad: it consisted mainly of Germans and Jews. Thus the body of people who would normally have formed a solid middle-class was almost entirely comprised of foreigners!

All these features have their effects on the Poland of to-day: the influence of the *Szlachta*, especially in the world of ideas: the effects of the peasants' long submergence; and the need for the reborn Poland to develop its own commercial class. We may pretend to despise tradition, but its effects go deeper than we know, and cannot be dismissed by polemics.

The political system of Poland was based upon an exaggerated worship of the word "liberty," at a time when the term was almost unknown in any other country. True, the liberty was entirely confined to the nobility and gentry, but with them it went far beyond reason. Absolute liberty in a large community is quite impossible: the Poles attempted to implement the idea, with dire results. Even the kings were elected, and inevitably the tendency was to elect weak men—often foreigners—so that the privileges of the *Szlachta* would remain unimpaired. Only when an accident of history or a clash of rival policies placed a man of personality on the throne was there any hint of the potential greatness of Poland. There are advantages in a hered-

itary monarchy and others in a republic: there are disadvantages in both forms of government. The Polish method of election ensured the advantages of neither with the disadvantages of both.

Another source of weakness—all in the name of liberty—was the *liberum veto*. If a single Member of Parliament voted against a measure, it was defeated! If one man proposed the adjournment of Parliament, then it was adjourned. Consequently, at a time when democratic ideas were stirring in the West, one reactionary in Poland could and did hold up any approach to reform. This was not liberty, but sheer absurdity. There was a time when Poland had led the world in progress: for centuries Poland and England were the only two countries in Europe with any form of parliamentary government. Now the nobles clung obstinately to feudal privileges, long after the moment had come for their discarding.

If ever a country needed a strong and firm government, it was Poland. The tolerance of her people made internal conditions very much better than my sketch may have suggested, but the geographical position of Poland should have roused her people against any form of weakness. The raids of the barbarians had now ceased, but Poland stood at the European cross-roads, without any suggestion of natural defences, the obvious battleground in the inevitable clash of Teutonic, Russian and Turkish ambitions. And at such a time Poland was ruled by kings who were usually elected nonentities, and by gentlemen whose decisions could be upset by one adverse vote! Thus by political ineptitude the Poles lost the position to which they were entitled by their ardent patriotism, their martial valour, their high culture and their tolerant outlook. The time was at hand when, by grasping too avidly at the emptier forms of liberty, they were to lose the substance.

III

In the miserable procession of native and foreign adventurers who became kings of Poland, a few men stand out with honour. There was Stephen Batory, who resisted with firm decision a long series of Russian invasions: his opponent was the redoubtable Ivan, rightly called the Terrible, but he firmly held the Russian menace. Then Polish attention was turned to the south: the Turks had overrun the Balkans, and were now penetrating into the heart of Europe. In 1683 an army of 300,000 appeared at the gates of Vienna. So terrible was their reputation that the Christian forces melted at their approach. The Emperor fled, but he and the Pope joined in an urgent appeal: would Poland once again act as the saviour of Christendom?

The king was a Pole, John Sobieski, a man of great character.

He gathered an army of 40,000 men; though heavily outnumbered, it included the finest shock troops in the world—the Winged Hussars. There were 3,000 of them, all knights: only a very strong man could carry their heavy armour: their lances were eight yards long. They were the armoured corps of their day, but more flamboyant than our tankmen. Over their armour they wore tiger or leopard skins: feathers adorned their helmets, and from their shoulders were draped long silver wings of eagles' plumes.

Sobieski led his army to Vienna. The irresistible charge of the Winged Hussars carried the day: the Turks fled precipitately from the heart of Europe, never to return. Sobieski sent the Turkish banner to the Pope with a simple message: *Venimus, videmus, Deus vicit.*

Scottish readers will note with interest that John Sobieski was the great-grandfather of Bonnie Prince Charlie.

He was the last great King of Poland. United in battle, after victory the Poles relapsed into their internecine strife; this is a form of tragedy known in every country of the world. Within a hundred years the last King of Poland occupied the throne. He had been placed there by the scheming of Catherine of Russia, whose subtle and ruthless plans included the destruction of Poland.

By this time Prussia had advanced rapidly in power: the Emperor at Vienna was still a potent influence in Central Europe. Russia, fast emerging from a tribal organisation into a nation-state, was imbued with the lust for territory and sovereignty. One of Poland's neighbours could have been held: the Germans have learned recently that it is difficult for a country to fight a war simultaneously on two fronts: the Poles were to be attacked on three.

In 1772 their neighbours—Russia, Austria and Prussia—concluded their immoral agreement, and effected the First Partition of Poland: each seized a slice of territory adjacent to its own borders. The Poles experienced a moral as well as a physical shock. All the weaknesses of their political system were now revealed in the moment of overwhelming danger.

The *Szlachta* must carry the greater share of the blame for the miserable state of their country at its hour of crisis. Thinking primarily of their own well-being, they had not only elected weak kings, but had refused to vote the necessary taxes for the maintenance of an adequate army. Thus in 1772 the Polish forces numbered only 14,000 ill-armed men—to withstand the attack of two empires and a kingdom.

At least the situation was boldly faced. The nobles at long last realised that in haggling over their privileges they had risked

the very existence of their country. They pressed on with salutary reforms: the monarchy was made hereditary, the absurd *liberum veto* was abolished: the lot of the peasants and traders was advanced. Yet Poland was to experience another form of universal tragedy, for all these things were done too late. These two words are the saddest in any language. There were new ideas abroad in Europe. There had long existed the closest links between Poland and France, where men were now discussing liberty, equality and fraternity, the rights of man, and other then revolutionary themes. They found an eager response in Polish hearts and minds. The Polish Constitution of May 3rd, 1791, resulted: it was a remarkable document, for it preceded that of France by several months. Nor were massacre and terror needed to bring it into being: the privileged classes renounced their arbitrary rights voluntarily. The door was opened to liberal forces and political freedom, with the common good replacing seigniorial ambitions. Yet this democratic constitution, remarkable in its day, led directly towards the doom of Poland.

For Russia, Austria and Prussia were autocracies, virtual dictatorships. How could they stomach such ridiculous ideas—that men had the right to think for themselves, and even to decide how they should be governed? Such dangerous theories might cross the frontiers, and contaminate the minds of the servile people of the dictator states: therefore they must be ruthlessly exterminated. Thus Poland must be eliminated from the map as a potential danger to her neighbours.

The Second Partition of Poland in 1793 aroused a great wave of patriotic devotion. Peasants and gentry marched side by side against the enemies of their country. Kosciusko was their leader: he was a clever and gallant commander, who had fought in the American War of Independence. He now won brilliant victories against the Russians: yet the end was inevitable. For a brief period under Napoleon, Poland was revived, but on his fall the country relapsed into its darkest days. The north-west corner had been seized by Prussia, the southern by Austria: the rest, two-thirds of the whole, lay under the Russian tyranny. From this period dates the foundation of many of the hatreds and problems of to-day.

IV

It was Rousseau who advised the Poles: "If you cannot prevent your neighbours from swallowing you, you can at least secure that they will not succeed in digesting you." His admonition was faithfully followed; for over a century the Poles lay in the Russian-Austrian-Prussian maw, but they emerged as Poles. Indeed, it would pay Poland's neighbours to-day to note one

important fact. In olden days patriotism had been an attribute of the nobility and gentry classes: the outlook of the land-tied peasant was too local. But under foreign domination the peasant became conscious of his racial brotherhood, and fought the hardest to preserve his nationality. The longer the years of subjection, the firmer his patriotic fervour.

In the Prussian sector rule was efficient, stern and thorough. German families were settled in the Polish provinces, and intense efforts were made to Germanise the local population. The use of the Polish language was forbidden, and every form of political and cultural repression was employed.

In Austrian Poland the situation was much easier. The cosmopolitan Empire was living through stormy days, and concessions were made to secure the friendship of the Poles. A modicum of home rule was granted: Polish universities and schools flourished, to keep alive Polish culture and tradition.

The picture in Russian Poland was vastly different. Here reigned tyranny, oppression, inefficiency and corruption. Time after time the Poles revolted, to be suppressed in bloody slaughter. Now was developed that fierce hatred of everything Russian which persists to the present day.

No terror was too grim for the Russian Tsars to apply to their Polish subjects, whose vivid patriotism refused to be subdued. All Polish schools were closed, but in the kitchens of the manor houses the daughters of the squire taught the peasant's children to read and write; the priest preached love of country as well as love of God; and in the cottages peasant women gathered the family about them in the evening, to recount the tales of Polish valour and suffering.

The many disasters which befell their land and people under foreign aggressors developed a cult of suffering in the Polish mind. It was *Szlachta*, noble, to suffer in the cause of Poland. Where an Englishman thinks of Waterloo and Trafalgar, a Pole recalls vivid pictures of insurrections against tyrants, all of which were hopelessly defeated and avenged. If we carry this idea in our minds, we have a background explanation of many Polish ideas of to-day.

The Poles never lost their ideas of liberty. The turn of the century saw the cause of national freedom advancing over Europe: one by one the small Balkan states broke away from the Turkish yoke. Poland's case was much more difficult—she had to face not one overlord, but three. As the European clash became so obviously inevitable, the Poles faced an anxious decision. Russia was to be on one side of the battle, Germany on the other. Which should the Poles support? Whichever won, there could be no expectation of a free Poland. One man decided firmly that there

was only one hope for Poland—that *both* Germany and Russia should be defeated. In 1914 this idea seemed fantastic, but he persisted, and saw it carried to fruition. His name was Joseph Pilsudski.

v

Pilsudski hailed from the Vilno region, in north-east Poland. In his student days he was a keen Socialist: as so often happens, he developed into a fervent nationalist, with the fire of patriotism burning fiercely within him. He was persecuted and imprisoned by the Russians for his faith, but they could not break his spirit. Eventually he escaped to Austrian Poland, where he persuaded the Austrians to establish a Polish Legion. With a few hundred ill-equipped men, he boldly invaded Russian-occupied Poland on August 6th, 1914.

The people rallied to him, but his success worried his backers. The Germans, especially, had no intention of allowing the creation of an independent Poland, and eventually they flung Pilsudski into prison at Magdeburg. There he languished until November, 1918, when he emerged to find that his fantastic dream had come true—that both Germany and Russia had been defeated.

In the meantime the plight of Poland had been appalling. The country had been fought over a dozen times, its peasants massacred and their homes destroyed, its sons conscripted into opposing armies. Some escaped to France, there to fight gallantly in the Allied ranks. In the political sphere Poland's fortune was better. The famous Polish pianist, Paderewski, was touring U.S.A., and almost by accident made the acquaintance of President Wilson, whom he interested in the fate and potentialities of Poland. Thus, when the President issued his famous Fourteen Points, the thirteenth explicitly declared for the re-creation of a free and independent Poland.

The collapse of Russia in 1917 left the whole of Poland in German hands, but the Poles were now exhilarated at the prospect of freedom. In November, 1918, they achieved their long-cherished ambition. Pilsudski, released from jail, disarmed the Germans and sent them home; Paderewski became Prime Minister of a non-party Government.

The difficulties facing the re-born state were immense. The country had been fought over for more than four years; one-fifth of its houses had been destroyed. There was chaos rather than confusion, with the broken remnants of three foreign administrations in the land. Yet the Poles faced their innumerable problems bravely. At least their country was free.

This was not quite true. The Allies were able to settle the

frontiers of Poland in the west, but those on the Russian border were much more difficult—Russia was still in the throes of her revolutionary wars. With whom should the Allies negotiate? The frontiers of 1772, broken by force by Russia, were clearly impracticable, as the areas about them were purely Russian in population: even further west the population was very mixed. Even with goodwill, confidence and restraint, the problem of Poland's eastern frontiers would have been immensely difficult, and these three qualities were entirely lacking in the councils of 1919. The question was destined to be settled by arms.

VI

These were the days when the Bolsheviks looked upon themselves as missionaries, destined to spread their faith over the world. The Poles could make no headway in their negotiations, and in 1919 the Russians were making obvious preparations to give to their neighbours the benefits of their own creed. To the Poles this meant return to the tyranny of Russian rule—in Eastern Europe, when a man refers to the Russians, he does not mean Bolsheviks, Communists or State Socialists, but Russians. So the Poles anticipated the Red Army invasion, and prepared to fight for their newly-gained liberty. There were many hesitations, even among men like Pilsudski. Had he struck earlier, at the height of the Revolutionary wars, he would have overthrown the Bolsheviks. This was not his plan—lest a reactionary Russian government might be restored, which would insist on the return of Polish territories. Thus he had consistently refused to join up with the White Army chiefs—Mr. Churchill reported at the time that “the inactivity of the Poles enabled the Bolsheviks to concentrate against Denikin”—and it was not until the Bolsheviks had disposed of their internal opponents that their war with Poland became a serious issue.

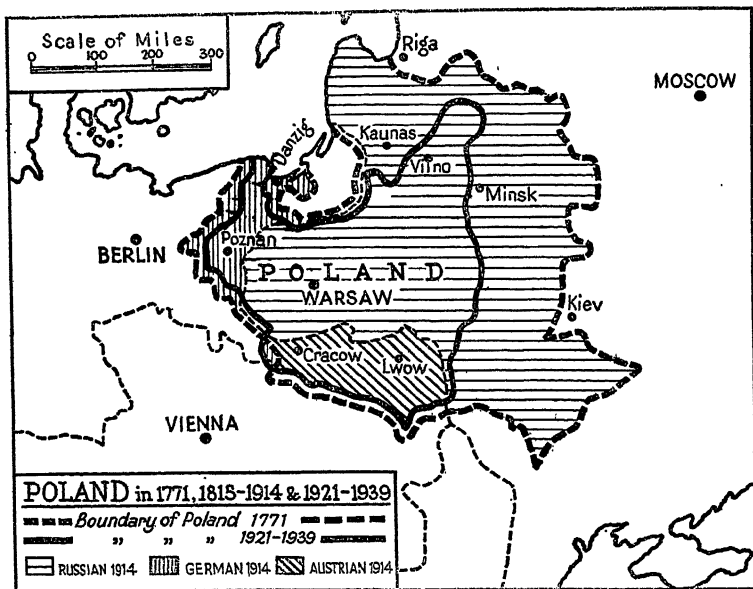
At first the Poles were successful: the course of the war was very confusing—at one time Poland was assisted by Ukraine, now a very important member of the Soviet Union. But by 1920 the Bolsheviks had crushed the “White” armies who were endeavouring to destroy the new régime: they could now devote the whole of their forces to the destruction of the Polish Army, with its scanty equipment.

At this period opinion on Poland abroad was very confused. Liberals remembered the tyranny of the Tsars, and sympathised with the Russian people in their fight for freedom. While it might be true that the Russian Revolution had seriously imperilled the Allied cause, now that the war was won democrats the world over sympathised with the Russian people. Thus the

Polish stand was often misinterpreted and represented as reactionary or imperialist.

The truth was soon revealed, as the Russian march into Poland was proclaimed as the beginning of world revolution. "The destinies of the world revolution will be settled in the West," declared the Russian commander. "Our way to worldwide conflagration passes over the corpse of Poland."

Small wonder that the Poles rallied to that doughty fighter Pilsudski. The Bolshevik army pressed up to the suburbs of Warsaw; the very existence of Poland was precarious. Then the Poles



hit back: their enemies were revealed as ordinary men, not inspired missionaries—more anxious to get back home than to spread their creed across the world.

The Russian defeat was complete: their retirement developed into a rout. The Bolshevik leaders recognised the situation, and made peace. To them at this time all frontiers were temporary—soon all Europe would come within the Soviet fold.

So both sides halted to lick their wounds and to organise their countries, both in a state of utter confusion. The eastern frontier was a compromise: though it was 200 miles west of that of 1772, it included considerable Ukrainian and Bielo-Russian elements within its population. This complication was to prove the pretext

for the events of 1939, as we shall examine later; but our superficial historical sketch will have shown that the roots of Polish-Russian distrust are far deeper. One-third of the Polish people living to-day were born as subjects of the Russian Tsars, inheriting from their parents a tradition of hatred which was reasonably justified. No nation can escape its history, and the Poles have never attempted to do so. If the Russians wished to win the affection and trust of the Poles, their only practical course was to discard Tsarist methods. Unfortunately, they failed to note this, and we shall see that Polish outlook to-day is clouded, not only by memories of the grim past, but by present events, which to most Poles are merely a continuation of long-standing Russian policy.

By 1921, then, Poland's frontiers at least were settled; she could turn her full attention to the vast and complicated problems which confronted her. Before we consider them, and before we take up our record of events which will lead dramatically to our own times, we ought to glance around Poland—the country and its people.

THE FACE OF POLAND

I

THE POLISH NAME FOR POLAND, *Polska*, means "field" or "plain." It is a simple yet an apt description of the greater part of Poland.

In the north, in the miscalled "Polish Corridor" are green hills with pleasant lakes. Then the plain begins, stretching for hundreds of miles to the south. Far south of Warsaw begins an upland region of gentle slopes, but not until the frontier is reached in the Carpathians are real mountains encountered.

The Polish vista is monotonous, for the land is part of the vast plain of Central Europe, a geographical continuation of the Russian steppes. Every available inch of the land is cultivated, usually in long, narrow strips: from the air the pattern is that of a fantastic chess-board. There are no hedges, and the prospect is relieved only by a row of top-heavy trees on the horizon, or a windmill, or a peasant village.

The peasant, did he but know it, is the most important man in Poland. A country could exist without its lawyers and shopkeepers, but not without its farmers. Too many people visited cities like Warsaw and Cracow, and imagined that they had seen Poland. Yet nearly three-quarters of the Poles live in villages, which are far more significant than cities in the life of the nation.

The Polish village can seldom pretend to be picturesque. It may consist of anything from twenty to a hundred houses, usually built end-on to the road. A brook may meander down the middle of the main street, and there will be plenty of geese about. The house is generally a timber cottage—standards vary considerably from west to east, declining considerably from the German frontier to the Russian. The usual pattern is two rooms. The main living room is large, and the life of the family centres about its great stove: in winter, indeed, this is the most important feature of the house. Sometimes it has no chimney, and its smoke finds a lazy egress through the eaves—more than once, before I was knowledgeable, I gave an alarm of fire. Polish sausages are noted in Eastern Europe, and the peasants believe that their striking flavour is the result of the curing effect of the smoke.

The furniture is plain enough—usually of local make, of substantial wood. There will be a table and chairs, a dresser, the dower chest in which the woman of the house brought the household linen when she married: in some districts this is brightly painted in traditional designs. The walls will be decorated by coloured plates—sometimes also of wood—and by sacred pictures, often tawdry, brought back from religious pilgrimages. In corners of the room will be one or two beds, according to the size of the family. They are large and well used: it is common for father and mother to sleep at one end, the children at the other. Of the older generation the girls occupy beds, while the boys sleep in the barns—or, in winter, on benches about the stove.

I have suggested that the town could not exist without the village, but the reverse does not apply, for the village is remarkably self-supporting. There is generally only one shop, which carries a wide range of supplies, to be supplemented by visits to the nearest market town. The peasant's wants are simple. He eats vegetables in large quantities—he consumes a ton of potatoes a year!—and grows them himself. There may be no butcher's shop in the village, but anyone killing a pig will give joints to his neighbours, and later receive them in return. Or, for a main meal, there are always the sausages hanging from the roof.

The communal spirit is strong, and existed centuries before collective farms were ever heard of. Each village looks to its headman, elected for a period of five years. I always found the Sunday morning scene full of interest. In the centre of the village would be the church, with the tavern and shop close by. The congregation—which would usually consist of the entire village—would emerge after the service, to gather in groups on the village green or in the churchyard for pleasant conversation. Then the headman would make his announcements. A wooden bridge had fallen in: reading from a roster, he would detail men to repair it. Roads needed attention: the fire patrol must be nominated—fire-watching has been a long and constant practice in a country of timber houses. Then follow more intriguing announcements: here is a list of children who have stayed away from school—their parents must see to it; here is another list of men who have not yet paid their taxes—this announcement is often the subject of humorous comment, but I have known British tax officials who envied the use of the method!

Now the men may adjourn to the tavern: the women sit and gossip, and the young people are animated by precisely the same instincts as prevail in more sophisticated countries. At some time there is certain to be dancing: Poland has a rare legacy

of folk music, and some of its local dances are of artistic distinction.

Once Poland was a land of great estates, with the peasants as little more than serfs. Their condition began to change generations ago. Long before governments began to satisfy the peasant hunger for land, men themselves had taken active steps. It was common for a Pole to go to America, to work hard and save enough to buy a farm at home.

It is an age-old ambition of the peasant to own his land. Its denial was a prime cause of the Russian Revolution: then, for a brief time, peasant farms were established and their owners were happy: later they were concentrated into collective farms—"wheat factories," the urban Communists called them—and at first the peasants resisted the change. Later they were mollified by the grant of 4 acres of their own land in addition to their share of the collective farm.

In Poland the wishes of the peasants prevailed. There were already considerable numbers of small farms, but after the emergence of Poland in 1918 a serious programme of agrarian reform was instituted. Many of the large estates were broken up into peasant farms. Even in 1921 there were only 19,000 holdings of more than 250 acres, while there were 3,200,000 farms of less than 50 acres: of these 1,110,000 were less than 5 acres, and were too small for a good standard of economic life. It was a fact, little realised abroad, that Poland was an overcrowded country. True, her density of population was only 89 per square kilometre, as compared with 193 for Britain or 76 for France, but she had few industries to take the surplus rural population. This led to the subdivision of the land into over-small units. In a French peasant family, one son would take over the farm while the others went to live in industrial towns; in Poland this outlet was small, so that a farm was often divided between two or three sons—or more. Only 27 per cent. of the population lived in towns, and the density of the rural population was two and a half times that of France.

The squire was once the master of the Polish village, but his influence has been declining for at least two centuries, and by 1918 was less than that of his English counterpart. Many of the manor houses still survive, relics of a more leisurely age; when still occupied, they dispensed that gracious hospitality for which Poland was famous.

Although the idea of the collective farm did not appeal to the Polish peasants, I have shown that the communal spirit already existed. For that matter, the Russians merely adapted their economic creed from an ancient survival. In the Balkans I have seen co-operative agricultural enterprises, with rules far more

strict than any Soviet wheat factory, which had persisted for 500 years. In some parts of Poland the village is a self-contained community: it grew up around the manor house, and even though they are now independent of a landlord the peasants work as a team—usually farming their own plots, but co-operating for marketing and purchasing of products. In nearly every Polish village grazing and forest rights are communal, shared equally between all families.

Poland is well wooded: there are not nearly as many isolated trees or spinneys as in England, but nearly a quarter of the surface was covered by forests. Of these, the greatest were in the eastern half of the country—for the moment I am describing the Poland of 1921–39. Here, too, were the vast wastes of the Pripet Marshes, gradually being reclaimed.

It is not necessary to say that the Polish peasant is a hard worker: that is the peasant tradition. The spring is a time of great activity: the summer spells a sixteen-hour day; then comes the harvest, and with the approach of winter a gentler tempo. The cattle must be tended, harness repaired, barns mended. Then the snow begins to fall, and the face of the land changes. The timber cottages, with their thatched or shingled roofs, lose their utilitarian appearance, and become fairy-tale pictures. Dirt and blemishes are hidden beneath the fresh and crisp whiteness. The long, clumsy wheeled carts lie unused in the sheds: instead, sleds glide over the frozen snow, bells tinkling gaily as ponies trot between the shafts.

II

Down in the south are the mountains. For the greater part of their length the Carpathians are pleasant rather than picturesque: green hills, with grassy slopes, admirable pasturage for sheep and cattle. At the Polish extremities of the range, however, are districts of unusual interest.

In the west stand the Tatra Mountains, pride of the Carpathians, shared between Poland and Czechoslovakia. Here the peaks top 7,000 and 8,000 feet. The upland valleys are untamed and lovely, with lakes nestling high up the mountainside.

The local inhabitants are a tribe apart from the lowland Poles—a highland race called the Goorals. Like most highlanders, they are of magnificent physique, inches taller than the Poles; they are hardy, and are passionately devoted to their mountains. The men cling to the traditional costume—white wool homespun, with embroidered geometric designs. The women have foolishly abandoned their peasant fashions in favour of nondescript mass produced frocks.

There are only a few thousand of the Goorals, scattered astride the Polish-Czech frontier: they are a connecting link between the two branches of the western Slav race.

At the other end of the Carpathians, south of Lwow, in the area now occupied by Russia, is a region which is not as spectacular as the Tatras, but just as rich in human interest.

When, in more troublous times, an English noble quarrelled with the king, he departed hastily to seek sanctuary in France or Scotland. His Polish equivalent fled to the Czarnahora, the Black Mountains, where the Carpathians bend towards Roumania. Here the king's hand lay but lightly, and the outlaw baron could find security in a mountain cave. He would raid local farms for food and, in his loneliness, might persuade the farmer's daughter to share his exile: failing that, he might carry her off by force. Incidents of this kind were such a feature of the region that a distinctive tribe emerged as descendants of the offspring of Polish nobles and local Ruthene girls. They are called the Huculs, and even to-day it is easy to mark their distinguishing characteristics from their neighbours. Their artistic sense is high: their traditional costumes are a delight, and their wooden churches wonders of artistic ingenuity, for they include in their construction not so much as an iron nail. The only building material is wood; the only implement an axe. There will be many regrets among the Poles at the passing of one of their most romantic tribes under foreign rule.

III

Warsaw was a Western city in its style and atmosphere. Its population was a million and a half—until the Germans destroyed it in 1944, when the place was deserted. By the end of the war, however, 200,000 had returned, and by the time of my visit in September, 1945, this figure had been doubled. Nobody could explain where they all housed themselves, but the outlying suburbs were fantastically overcrowded.

I have already mentioned some of its ancient buildings, now heaps of rubble. Modern constructions shared their fate: some of the skyscrapers of Warsaw would have attracted attention in London, if not in New York.

Yet to many Poles Cracow is as important as Warsaw. It was the capital until the union with Lithuania in 1386, when Warsaw was chosen as being more central geographically, but Cracow is still a cultural home for all Poles. Its University is world-famous: in age it is second in Central Europe only to that of Prague.

Cracow is a beautiful city: happily, it has escaped serious

damage. Someone called it a bit of Italy planted north of the Alps, and it is true that Italian architects played a big part in its making. Yet its atmosphere is its own: its quiet streets are flanked by dignified houses with spacious doorways. I found one of them in use as a Red Army headquarters, with the inevitable monster portrait of Stalin above the door. A neighbour objected: "Not that I have anything to say against Stalin," he explained, "but this propaganda stuff does not marry with these ancient walls."

By the side of the Vistula is a little hill called the Wawel. It is the site of a cathedral, a palace and a fortress. The cathedral is of historic interest rather than beautiful, but the palace is delightful: its courtyard is surrounded by balconied arcades, and its weathered stone tones gently with the soft sunlight.

Under the Wawel is a cave, where once lived a fearful dragon which demanded a virgin as its daily ration. Dozens of knights attempted to slay the beast, but failed. Then a young man named Krakus decided to use his brains rather than his sword. He filled the carcase of a sheep with sulphur: the dragon ate it, and was so thirsty that it ran to the river and drank till it burst. The virgin for the day, rescued from a sorry fate, married Krakus, and the Aldermen gave his name to their city. I have often pointed out the moral to Polish friends: that brains are often better weapons than swords.

Not all the interest of Cracow centres on the royal Wawel. In the centre of the market place is a great hall, the Sukiennice. Its architecture is interesting. Italian influence was profound in southern Poland, but architects had to make provision for winter snows, while they abhorred sloping roofs. They overcame the difficulty by the creation of the "Polish attic"—the steep slope of the roof is hidden by a false façade.

In a corner of the market place is a famous church, the Marjacki—the Church of Our Lady: but the citizens of Cracow affectionately call it Panna Marya—Maid Mary. Its two towers are irregular, built in competition by two brothers—one of whom slew the other in jealousy when his own tower was outclassed. Inside are the chapels of the trade guilds, but pride of the church was an amazing altar-piece, carved by Wit Stwosz, the famous Nuremberg artist. It was naturally looted by the Germans, but has been traced, and by this time should be back in its rightful home.

Every hour—and especially at night, when the traffic is stilled—you will hear the notes of a silver trumpet from a tower of the Marjacki. This is the *heymal*, a romantic survival of wilder days. You will notice that it ends abruptly.

Once, as Tartar invaders stormed into Cracow, a trumpeter sounded the alarm. An archer shot him through the throat, and

since that day the *heynal* has ended on the broken note, where it was interrupted by death.

(The story is legendary, but is firmly believed. I must add a caution about legends. A friend of mine, a writer serving in the Polish Army, wrote a sequel to the story of the *heynal*. On its way out of Russia, a Polish unit found itself at Samarkand. Local dignitaries waited on the commander: had he trumpeters, and, if so, could they play in the market-place? He agreed at once, but asked why. Then he was told of a legend of Samarkand—that, hundreds of years ago, a Polish trumpeter was just calling the faithful to prayer when a Tartar bowman from Samarkand shot him through the throat, and that no good fortune could come to Samarkand until Polish trumpeters played in the market-place. So the *heynal* was sounded to a vast concourse of people, and there was great rejoicing in Samarkand. My friend's story was, of course, an ingenious piece of fiction, but I met many people who believed it, and it may become incorporated in the original legend!)

The Poles have an ingenious method of venerating their heroes. They erect huge mounds of earth, hundreds of feet high. The idea is good: if you cannot afford to subscribe a shilling, you can at least carry a basket of earth and add it to the mound; thus the artificial hill consists of earth from every corner of Poland, and is virtually erected by hundreds of thousands of people.

There are three of these huge mounds outside Cracow: one is to the memory of Krakus, the dragon-slayer; the second to Kosciusko, the hero who resisted the Russians; and the latest to the man who did so much to mould the reborn Poland, Joseph Pilsudski.

What Cracow means to Polish culture and history, so a little town fifty miles north means to its religion: this is Czestochowa, the Polish Lourdes. Here is an enormous monastery—fortunately, like Cracow, it has escaped all but minor war damage. On a religious festival as many as 300,000 people will gather on the plain outside the monastery walls for a religious service. Peasants will save up their scanty pence for months so as to be able to make the pilgrimage. The feature is the exhibition of the picture of the Virgin, painted on wood—it is alleged by St. Luke. The face is extremely dark, and is known as the "Black Virgin"; miraculous powers are freely credited to her.

The Canterbury of Poland is Gniezno, much further north. Yet a more interesting religious centre is Lowicz, only fifty miles west of Warsaw. Here the people have retained, not only their religious zeal, but their ancient costumes, which are amazingly colourful. Lowicz on a feast day like Corpus Christi is like a scene from a play: not even the German war could halt the local tra-

dition, and the ceremonies of 1945 were as vivid as any of their predecessors.

Other cities of Poland are utilitarian rather than romantic. Pozan (in German, Posen), has been badly damaged in the war, but will recover; Torun and Bydgoszcz have German associations in their architecture, but are Polish in history and spirit. Katowice, in Upper Silesia, is the centre of a rich area of mines and metal industries of the "heavy" type, and Lodz is Poland's Manchester, one of the leading textile cities in Europe. Now that Warsaw has been battered and partly depopulated, Lodz is the largest city in Poland.

IV

Three other towns deserve mention: they lie in the East, and have now become Russian, but the passing of two of them is especially regretted by all Poles.

Though Pinsk was a Polish city, over 70 per cent. of its population was Jewish. It was in the centre of the amazing Pripet Marshes, where peasants found a living wherever a few square yards of ground protuded above the surface of the shallow water. Pinsk itself was a town of one-story wooden houses, one of the most remarkable places in Europe.

Lwow and Vilno, however, were Polish cities of rich historical and sentimental associations. Lwow was in the south-eastern corner of Poland, a great cultural and ecclesiastical centre. Yet it faced an anomaly often encountered in this corner of Europe—while the city was indubitably Polish, the surrounding countryside had a Ukrainian majority.

Vilno, in the north-east, was likewise disputed. Until the union of 1386 it was the capital of Lithuania; then Poles and Polish influence began to permeate the city, and by 1918 there was no question about the Polish character of the place.

Vilno is of intense interest. One of its churches, that of St. Anne, is so lovely that Napoleon planned to move it brick by brick to France. Yet pride of place among Vilno's shrines goes to the Ostra Brama, the Sacred Gate. A famous shrine is ensconced in an ancient gateway, above the street. Three times a day traffic is completely halted so that services can be held, and there is a local legend that at whatever hour of day or night you pass, someone will be kneeling before the shrine. This legend has at least a substantial basis of fact.

Now Lwow and Vilno have been taken from Poland, but we shall encounter them again in our record. If I am not mistaken, we shall hear of them again in the world of political problems, for very few Poles can be persuaded that their historic cities are irretrievably lost.

This, then, is a picture of Poland—an outline which holds few excitements. Its cities are of the type common in Central Europe—ancient settlements with historic buildings, or modern constructions with important factories, or a mixture of both. Until 1939 the urban development of Poland was proceeding apace. Towns were expanding beyond all former limits: new ones were springing up.

As the German menace became clearer, it was obvious that Polish heavy industry in Upper Silesia was hopelessly exposed to any German attack. Thus a new industrial area was created, in a triangle within the confluence of the rivers Vistula and San. This was the Centralny Okreg Przemyslowy, or Central Industrial Area, usually known as C.O.P. Here new factories were built, the mountain streams further south were tapped for power, and there was even a direct supply of earth gas from the small Polish oilfield.

Yet, with all this, only 27 per cent. of the Polish population lived in towns—only 19·4 per cent. were engaged in industry. The real picture of Poland is the one on which this chapter started—the wide plain, with its hedgeless surface cut into a varied pattern of strips of land, intensely cultivated by their peasant owners: every few miles, a village of timber cottages nestling about its church; every thirty miles a small market town. Politics are usually made and directed in the towns, but the politicians who made the mistakes were those who ignored or neglected the Polish countryside, then as now the greatest source of the country's strength and of its weaknesses.

There is nothing spectacular about the Polish rural scene: nor has its soil any outstanding fertility. Yet it was so cultivated that it could feed its people and provide an ample surplus for export. To-day many of the Polish towns are shattered, but the countryside is indestructible.

THE PEOPLE OF POLAND

I

AT THE OUTBREAK OF WAR, the Poles were hailed as a heroic people, the first to make the brave decision to stand against Hitler; the Western democracies showered promises upon them: their country would be restored, the misfortunes of war reversed. Later, after the German attack on Russia, when the Poles declined to surrender half their country to their Soviet allies, they were represented as obstinate romanticists—they were not “realists.” Later it was discovered that the Poles were really a feudal people, and thus apparently had no claim to justice: their leaders were Fascists—although they had defied Hitler while others made accommodations with him. Still, later, when a Communist Government had been imposed upon Poland, it was decided that after all the Poles were among the angels. And many of the people who suffered these violent changes of opinion did not realise that they were the victims of that type of political propaganda which seeks to support its own case by vilifying its opponents.

The character of a people does not change so rapidly. An ethnic student of a century ago, presented with an outline of the facts, could have forecast fairly accurately how the Poles would have replied to the German threat in 1939 and to the Russian demands in 1941. The character and outlook of a people depend considerably upon the course of its history, and this, as we have seen, gives a fairly clear lead to the Polish attitude towards its neighbours.

An examination of Polish characteristics will be useful, though it is understood that national features can be general, but never universal. One outstanding feature is the surprising homogeneity of the Poles. Considering that they were divided under three foreign rules for nearly a century and a half, the consistency of their character is remarkable. It is true, of course, that national characteristics are emphasised in days of adversity, and tend to disintegrate in times of prosperity. Especially, the purity of the Polish language is surprising. Save for small tribes like the Kashubes in the north and the Goorals in the south, Polish is very free from dialects; you may meet a Pole from Cracow and one

from Vilna, and from their tongue you will get no trace of their origin. Contrast the difference in speech between a Somerset farmer and a Wigan miner—with a considerably smaller distance separating their homes. Geography is the probable cause of Polish lingual unity: the great plain has no natural barriers to arrest the development of speech: or of ideas, for in their general outlook the Poles are probably more similar than any other people of their number.

II

Your fervent patriot is seldom found in the secure centre of his country; he appears in its debated perimeter, where danger threatens from over-interested neighbours. Here he will preach an enthusiastic patriotic creed, often sincerely believed, but usually with a touch of self-interest and especially of self-protection.

So it has been with Poland. For centuries the outpost of Western Christendom against barbarian raiders from the East, the Poles held to Western ideas with sincerity and fervour. Anything emanating from the East was held to conflict with the ideas absorbed from the West, which were guarded as a sacred foundation to Poland's culture. This historic-geographic legacy has strong effects even to-day.

They apply, for example, to Poland's religion. The country is not merely Roman Catholic, but almost completely Roman Catholic: apart from the Jews, there are not more than 200,000 people professing other faiths—these are mostly Protestants of German origin.

Except perhaps in Ireland, there is no country in Europe where the influence of the Roman Catholic Church was as strong as in Poland. This helped to create a barrier against Russia, with its Orthodox traditions—followed by an atheist predominance.

Their religion was an important part of the faith of the Poles in their mission as the eastern standard-bearers of Christendom. Such a mission could only be accomplished on a basis of national religious unity. The Reformation made practically no headway in Poland. There was no forcible repression. "I am not king of your consciences," said the Polish King when asked to exterminate the new ideas. "If this new Lutheran doctrine be false, it will disappear on account of its falsity, and we shall hear no more of it: but if it be true, it will endure from generation to generation."

Toleration has always been a feature of Polish religious life. Of the first twelve prime ministers after 1919, three were Protestants—a number out of all proportion to the strength of their creed. This tolerance has a firm historic basis. Poland entirely

avoided the bloody terror of the religious wars which devastated Western Europe: she offered sanctuary to the Jews when they were persecuted in other lands. To-day the State subsidises, not only the Roman Catholic Church, but Protestant, Orthodox, Jewish and Mohammedan religious bodies.

The national background of Polish religion was emphasised in the eastern marches, where the population was very mixed, and where hundreds of thousands of people simply did not know whether they were Poles or Russians. In such cases the distinction was usually made by religion. If a man were a Roman Catholic, he was classed as a Pole: if Orthodox, as a Russian. This method did not indicate what a man really was, but what he thought he was—almost as important.

The Poles held to their religion firmly: this is especially noticeable in the peasant villages. It is a simple, solid faith, to be expressed in every walk of human life: the qualities most esteemed in Poland are honour, courtesy and toleration. The priest is a very important man: he is no aloof figure, but one of the people, sharing their difficulties as well as their joys. It was significant that when the Germans wished to break the Polish spirit, they made one of their first onslaughts against the priesthood.

It is true that emotion features largely in Polish religious outlook. The amazing scenes at the great pilgrimage centres are unsurpassed in Europe. Every mile or so on a country road is a primitive shrine, which few people pass without a prayer: religious emblems form a large part of the decorations of a peasant home. It may be true that Polish religion is emotional rather than intellectual, but its roots are deeper than this criticism would imply.

While church-going is not necessarily a measurement of religious feeling, it is certain that many an English parson would give his ears to have congregations the size of those which gather even in the most remote Polish villages.

III

No national character was ever simple or universal: often it exhibits amazing contradictions. I have referred to the tolerance of the Poles, their acknowledgment of the rights of others. Coupled with it is a vigorous individualism. This does not imply selfishness: it is based upon a passion for individual freedom—some people appear to consider this out of date, but the Poles do not. Sometimes this individualism has led to absurd results—as in the *liberum veto*, whereby one adverse vote could halt legislation: this was not democracy, but liberty carried to a farcical individual licence.

This Polish characteristic has been the root cause of some of the country's difficulties. It implies that absolute unity is hard to attain: political parties break up into disjointed fragments—with some comparatively detailed opinions separating them. These can be as effective as major diversities. The Pole entirely lacks what is usually called the British genius for compromise. Not only does he lack it—he does not even understand it.

This complicates the Polish outlook, which is very practical yet at the same time is influenced by a traditional romanticism. It is such a contradiction which enables the Poles at times to confuse even their friends. There are occasions when they will take every risk in pursuit of what others might describe as a sentimental idea: there are others when they are sternly realist. When the two attitudes come into opposition, the confusion of thought can be imagined: and when they come into conjunction the effect is just as unintelligible to the foreign observer: but not to the Poles.

IV

Until our own time the women of Poland occupied the second place which was their accepted position in every country. Now they have emerged from family obscurity, and are playing a big part in the development of their country.

The educated Polish woman can compare with any in the world. Her standards of intellect, culture and conversation are extraordinarily high. When a man kisses her hand—the normal greeting—it is not merely a tribute of courtesy, but of respect. Even in the days of their political submergence, Polish women made their influence felt. Not only did they work beside their men: in battle they fought beside them. More than once I have mused over one intriguing possibility. When the Poles selected their Unknown Warrior for ceremonious burial and honour, the choice was made from among the defenders of Lwow—the first battle of the re-born Poland. Now, at that time the young men of Lwow were away conscripted in different armies: the defenders of the city consisted of old men and boys—and women and girls. So it is not impossible that the body of Poland's Unknown Warrior is that of a woman!

There is the usual distinction between the women of town and country. The townswoman is often well turned out: she may not be beautiful, but she takes a pride in her appearance; Paris has long been the Mecca of Polish women. The peasant housewife has a harder lot: she is not merely the mother of a large family; she works in the fields beside her man. Her influence is wide: she is always consulted before a decision is made; often she holds the family purse. She has been the mainspring of religious

thought in Poland: and in the dark days of foreign oppression she did more than anyone else to keep alive the Polish spirit. German or Russian were the languages of school education: foreign teachers sought to impose their ideas. The cleverest among them were frustrated by the mothers of Poland, who maintained the national language against all opposition, and who gathered their families about the great stove to listen to the heroic stories of Kosciusko and John Sobieski.

Where the influence of woman is strong, so is the tie of the family. In Soviet Russia, early and over-hasty reformers attempted to break the family influence: they failed, and their successors have wisely recognised the failure. In Poland any attempt would be doomed from the outset.

The Polish language gives the clue to the importance of the family. There are individual words to express different blood relationships which would require entire phrases in English—in one word a Pole can describe his second cousin on his mother's side. The general term "brother" includes all male members of a family: a real brother is a "born brother."

The Polish family was important politically. I have described how estates were subdivided among sons, then among grandsons, so that an entire region might be formed by small landowners who were relatives—a miniature tribe. The real influence of the noble depended not so much upon his wealth, as upon his position as the head of a widespread family.

The peasant family is just as loyal—and there are few Poles who are not of peasant origin. They retain their contact with their village, and it is quite common to find professional men spending their holidays in helping with the harvest on the family farm.

There young and old work as a team. Indeed, the life of the peasant and his family is regulated by the calendar rather than by Acts of Parliament. There are times when he can labour alone, and others when the smallest hand can be of assistance.

The peasant has been grievously underrated in Europe. Factory hands may grumble at their labours, but he works far harder than any of them, often for a meagre financial reward. He is at the mercy of Nature, far more inexorable than any machine or trade union regulation. On the other hand, there is little monotonous in his labour, and in these days he often experiences the thrill of ownership.

He belongs to the soil. He may even have been born in the fields, for the peasant woman keeps to her daily toil until the last possible minute, and sometimes miscalculates. In any case, she will be back in the fields within a few days after the birth of her child. He will be slung under a tree in a rough hammock, to be

suckled in the intervals of hoeing or reaping. At a very early age he himself begins to work. At three he will look after the geese; at six he will be promoted, and will give expert direction to the grazing of the family cow. You will see him and his kind every few hundred yards across Poland, squatting by the roadside, or moving on the cow to a richer pasture. By the age of ten he is a fully-fledged member of the family gang. School holidays are adjusted so that he can be of the maximum aid to his parents. He knows too little of fun and play, and becomes a man too early.

He is surrounded by the conservatism of the soil. He tends to behave as his father and grandfather did: the same influences are all about him. Later, as he becomes politically conscious, he may call himself a Liberal or a Socialist, but he can never escape the conservative influences of his upbringing and daily life. This does not mean that he is content with his lot. For too long he has been neglected, but now he is awaking. When he attains his full stature, the factory workers who have tended to despise him may get a considerable shock.

V

In every country it is essential to differentiate between urban and rural workers, and in Poland the differences are strongly marked. As usual, the industrial worker is much better off than the peasant.

The industrial revolution, or its equivalent, did not begin in Poland until 1815. Then its progress was erratic, since the country was divided under three masters. There were three mining areas, for example—Upper Silesia in German Poland, Cracow in Austria, and Dombrowa in Russia. These were subject to the policies and living standards of the three countries, so that a Polish miner in Germany was very much better off than a Polish miner in Russia. Thus to the political boundary was added a wage frontier which had considerable effects. The Silesian miner was a professional who made a fair living at his job; his brother at Dombrowa had to run a tiny peasant farm as well. There are many traces of the effects of earlier provincial organisations in Polish affairs to-day—especially in Polish differences.

The Poles have always been famous as miners—the salt mines of Wieliczka, near Cracow, have been worked continuously for a thousand years. In most other industries Poland was desperately short of technicians: the skilled workman was always at a premium, and could command a high wage. The rates for unskilled labourers were, however, very low. The combination of industrial worker and peasant in the same man was very common, and was impelled by economic causes.

As usual, too, the town worker led the peasant in organisation.

Polish trade unions developed from the craft guilds: they had their own organisations for sickness and accident benefits, and when Poland regained her freedom they advanced their power considerably, totalling more than 2 million members. There were many strikes for better conditions, but although wages remained low by Western standards, they were higher than in most neighbouring countries, and social legislation was well advanced.

Again following the normal course, the town was more susceptible to political causes than the country. The Polish Socialist Party was at first exclusively urban. It drew its ideas from French sources, and was, of course, rigorously repressed by the Tsars. Thus it became strongly identified with the patriotic movement for Polish freedom—Pilsudski was one of its leaders. Its underground activity was a wonderful preparation for the necessities of the war years. (one section *was* literally underground—Polish miners dug a gallery connecting a pit in Austria with one just over the border in Russia: through this tunnel were smuggled men and propaganda.)

Many Socialist leaders were executed by the Russians, and thousands persecuted. This led to an anti-Russian complex which has by no means disappeared to-day. Thus, when the Bolshevik armies marched into Poland in 1920, calling upon the Poles to rally to the brotherhood of the world, they were surprised when Polish workers took up arms and fought sturdily against them. Freedom from Russian domination, whatever its form, meant more to all Poles than a political ideology.

Similarly, during the recent conflict, the Polish Socialists took a firm line, standing against Russian as well as German aggression. They firmly supported the Home Army, which carried on a vivid underground activity: they were prominent in the tragic Battle of Warsaw in 1944.

Most Socialists have moved but little from their original demands—for an independent Poland, pursuing a moderate Socialist programme. The party had its greatest strength in the towns, but of late years had made some headway in the villages.

Living conditions varied considerably. In some parts of Silesia they were excellent: in other towns—especially in the Russian zone—the workers were housed in slums. The new Poland tackled the difficulties, and considerable progress was made during the inter-war years. This especially applied to social legislation.

In his life and outlook the Polish worker was akin to his fellow in other countries, except that the history and geography of his country induced a sturdy patriotism which often overrode domestic considerations.

Hospitality and courtesy rank high among the Slav virtues, and in Poland are especially emphasised, for in the past the Poles added to their racial inheritance of traditions by borrowing freely from Western sources. At one period Italian influence was strong, and is reflected in the rather flowery forms of address—which, however, also derive from the days when the *szlachta* manners were the pattern for all Poles.

Even ordinary phrases are given a courteous turn, and there is no sense of formality about them. Once I saw a Polish policeman dealing with a somewhat inebriated citizen. His address was mild enough: "Please, sir, will you be good enough to go home?"

Polish hospitality is profound. I have tasted it in some of the surviving manor houses, where it is a gracious tradition, and in peasant cottages. In normal times food is plentiful, and cooking is good—again, the Poles have drawn on the recipes of East and West in developing their national cuisine.

Lest this chapter should seem to become a catalogue of virtues, let me add that the Pole has a poor sense of time. He is irritating in his hopeless unpunctuality, but charming in his apologies. He is often classed as unreliable and a muddler, but this trait can be exaggerated. I would not call him a good organiser, but he is a first-class improviser. His memory is long, and his likes and dislikes can be very persistent.

Another trait shared with his Slav brothers is a love of music. Chopin, the best-known composer, is only the most eminent of a long and honoured list. There is a traditional wealth of folk music, and Polish dances have been famous for many centuries. The Polish ballet specialises not in formal themes, but in the choreographic representation of old folk tales, using local airs.

The Poles give their outstanding men of the arts great honour. In any town you are likely to see statues to Chopin and Paderewski: to Nicolaus Koppernigk—better known under his Latinised name of Copernicus, who was born at Torun; Adam Mickiewicz, Poland's greatest poet, who used his great gifts to spur the Polish spirit when it suffered under oppression.

Another writer who achieved world fame was Henryk Sienkiewicz, whose best-known work was *Quo Vadis?* More topical is his *Knights of the Cross*, which throws a vivid light on Polish history. In our own time, Ladislas Reymont won a Nobel Prize for his quartet of novels, *The Peasants*. A second writer achieved one of the most remarkable literary feats of the age—he attained classic rank while writing in a foreign language. His Polish name was Korzeniowska, but we knew him as Joseph Conrad.

In very different spheres two other Poles made important contributions to the world. Dr. L.L. Zamenhof invented Esperanto, which may still become a potent aid in the bringing of world peace; and Marie Sklodowska with her husband, Pierre Curie, discovered radium.

Yet for the moment we are more concerned with the ordinary people of Poland. I have outlined some of their qualities and failings. They have most of the faults of a peasant people, but with the romantic and emotional conservatism they mingle a vigorous determination and a spirit of endeavour which is bound to bring its reward.

PILSUDSKI'S POLAND

I

ONLY INTENSE ENTHUSIASTS could have surveyed with any optimism the re-born Poland of 1918.

The situation was fantastic: the country had been terribly devastated by war: there were three currencies in the land—all bankrupt; the state had no fixed frontiers, but it had four separate codes of law. I recall a friend who pointed out that, as he and his wife were married by civil licence in Poznan, then in German Poland, they were living in sin when they moved to Warsaw.

The outlook of the Polish peoples themselves was varied. There were many who had lived under the easy tolerance of Austria, or the stern efficiency of Germany: there were more who had endured the terrorism of Russian oppression. Yet although ideas might differ, all Poles were united in their desire for a strong and free Poland.

Unfortunately, good intentions are not enough in an imperfect world. After the echoes of the resounding speeches eulogising liberty had died away, the statesmen had to face very hard facts.

Indeed, the state of Poland was a vivid rehearsal of conditions destined to become very common more than twenty years later. Conservatives and Socialists had fought side by side for a free Poland; but, once that objective were attained, they began to argue without reticence as to its details.

However, there was no debate on one issue: it should be a democratic Poland. Old traditions emerged in the moment of triumph: there was no question of the imposition of some new creed—democracy can only spring from the people, can never be imposed from above. The democratic idea had long been firmly held. Even in the days of *Szlachta* supremacy, because of the wide spread of this class a higher proportion of people in Poland had the right to vote than in any other country: and we have seen that by 1793 Poland was outstripping even revolutionary France.

Thus the new constitution was of the most liberal character. The powers of the President were limited—they drew from the French model rather than the American. The Sejm, or House of Commons, was directly elected by free and secret ballot, and held the main political power. There was also a Senate, with

restricted functions. Wide powers were granted to local authorities: this was a mistake, at such a time—a new state does best under a strong centralised authority, like that of Russia. Only when it is firmly established can it safely delegate its powers.

The constitution guaranteed freedom of life and property to all inhabitants, regardless of race or creed. No privileges of birth or class were recognised. Religious freedom was absolute, and a system of compulsory education introduced. In a peaceful world, on conditions of confidence, the Polish constitution would have been an admirable document. In a country bordered by potential enemies, and torn by internal political dissension, it soon became obvious that the constitution would not work in such troubled times. There was a dangerous reversion towards that extreme of personal liberty which had rendered Poland so supine two centuries earlier. Democracy can never promise unlicensed individual liberty of action: the only result would be chaos. So it was in Poland. By the constitution, anybody could start a political party—and the first Parliament included the representatives of twenty-seven parties, all equally vociferous in their claims to power. Small wonder that the Sejm lapsed into a debating society at a moment when strong action was vital.

It was such a scene which Pilsudski viewed with the contempt of the man of action. Poland was still in the chaos of her re-birth. Communications had been hopelessly disrupted by the war. Economic life was at a standstill, for the three currencies were not worth the paper they were printed on. The country districts were in confusion, for the Germans and Russians between them had removed the greater part of the live stock, and many of the great estates were in process of division into peasant farms. And with these and a thousand other critical problems burdening Polish life, the politicians of twenty-seven parties wrangled.

It might be democratic, but it was nonsense, Pilsudski argued. His own methods were much more direct. If the railways had to be got running again, he would appoint a man to the job, and would not care whether he did it by capitalist or Socialist means: the point was not whether somebody had made a profit or had scored a political victory, but were the railways running?

Yet for the first years Pilsudski was no more than a Cabinet Minister, though his influence throughout the country was profound. When he tired of his efforts to make Parliament face up to facts, his reactions were typical of the man—abrupt, with a touch of cynicism. There was no attempt to seize power on the later Hitler-Mussolini methods. Instead, in November, 1923, he suddenly resigned all his offices. Politicians and people alike would have to learn their lesson by bitter experience.

It was bitter enough. Even had Poland been amply supplied

with veteran statesmen, their task would have been immensely difficult. Government succeeded government with monotonous irregularity. Sincere men strove in vain to reduce the chaos to order. Men still recall those times when democratic political liberty was at its maximum—but little or nothing was done.

Each prime minister inherited all the old problems plus those created by his predecessor. In May, 1926, Witos, the peasant leader, formed a Government. He decided to strike a blow at Pilsudski's influence in the Army by dismissing the Marshal's friends.

Pilsudski's action was quite illegal. Supported by the Army, he drove Witos from power. Again, he differentiated himself from the stock pattern of the dictator. He refused to become President or even Prime Minister: instead, he took the office of Minister of War. Thus he began his "dictatorship from the rear." He introduced new personalities into politics, and their apprenticeship was no sinecure. One cartoonist showed Pilsudski throwing his colleagues into a lake to see if they could swim! He knew his people very well: they trusted him personally, but would have resisted vigorously any suggestion of a dictatorship on the Fascist model. His function was to give a guiding hand to the new and untried parliamentary machine. If it worked, so much the better: if it failed, Pilsudski was always at hand to keep it going until a new set of mechanics could be installed.

II

Pilsudski's actions could seldom be classed as democratic by the Western definition of the word. He was bitter in his comments on those politicians who had apparently forgotten Poland and had remembered their party differences rather than their national duties. The situation was admittedly absurd. Between 1921 and 1926 Poland had had fourteen governments, and eighty different parties existed in the country.

What made matters worse was the general trend of political thought. During the nineteenth century the Poles had automatically been hostile to the foreign governments imposed upon them. They tended to carry over into their new country the habits of intrigue which they had developed in resisting their aggressors. Everybody was ready and able to be in opposition: few were prepared to take the responsibility of government.

In this latter respect Pilsudski differed from his fellows. Yet he never attempted to copy the Russian one-party system, or to set a precedent for future Hitlers and Mussolinis. Such was the state of Poland that he could have made himself dictator in half an hour. Instead, he took four years to consolidate his power.

He began to build up what he intended to be a non-party *bloc*, but which inevitably ended as a political organisation, called the Sanacja, or Sanitary Party. "Sanitary" is not an exact translation: the original word meant rather "setting one's house in order." By legal and illegal methods, he gradually eliminated his opponents. The complete venom of totalitarian methods was absent. In the 1930 elections Witos, the peasant leader, was imprisoned for the appropriate period—a favourite Pilsudski device. Yet the name of Witos was not removed from the list of candidates, and he was, in fact, elected.

Pilsudski's original coup had been strongly supported by the working classes—who staged a general strike in his support. Later, however, he tended to recede from his earlier Socialist trends, and began to draw a good deal of his political support from the landed gentry and industrialists, but his personal reputation was high in most quarters. He favoured what used to be called a "business government," of experts rather than professional politicians. Some of the men he used were excellent choices—and others were not! His principal fault was excessive loyalty to the men who had helped him in his early struggles against foreign tyrannies.

It would not be correct to say that Poland was a totalitarian state. Having assured himself a considerable majority in Parliament, Pilsudski made no attempt to stifle the opposition, which could publish newspapers and carry on propaganda.

Pilsudski could safely ignore the opposition because it was so divided. It came from the extreme Right and the extreme Left—two factions which could never agree between themselves.

(For that matter, neither could his supporters. When I referred to his political system as "one-party," he retorted: "You are wrong. I have 200 members. That means 200 parties." His was the very difficult task of unification.)

Poland was progressing: with political squabbles relegated to a back position, it began to settle down into a composite whole. Nevertheless, there were plenty of Poles who believed that Pilsudski's success was purchased at too high a price. His high-handed methods assured wide opposition, and occasioned much criticism abroad. He never swerved from his objective: Poland needed ten years of organised development, he claimed; after that, the outward forms of democracy would be restored.

His plan was hard hit by the world economic slump of 1930. A peasant country never starves, but Poland's exports were considerably reduced, with much consequent distress. The usual antidotes were applied—subsidies being a prominent feature. Thus rail rates were adjusted so that Polish coal could compete in the British market in Scandinavia. Home prices were left

high so that export prices could be low. There had been a considerable export of foodstuffs to Britain; now, after the slump, Britain's purchasing power dropped. So Polish prices were lowered—in effect, the Polish peasant had to help to feed the British workman. I am not an economist, but it was surely an absurd situation when Polish sugar cost less in London than it did in Warsaw.

However, although the standards of living were lowered, the Poles retained their confidence, which is in itself the best counteraction to economic slump. A certain sign of distress in rural Europe can be found in the statistics of sales of farm property; in the worst years in Poland they never rose above the average.

In recent years, most countries have willingly allocated dictatorial powers to their governments to meet the critical situations caused by war: and Pilsudski's "dictatorship from the rear" seems very mild compared with that of his contemporaries. There were no "purgings," no wholesale massacres. He claimed that the re-born Poland was indeed facing a crisis, and that the situation demanded the desperate remedies which later became familiar even in the Western democracies.

No one could ever doubt his ardent patriotism. "I know neither Right nor Left. I know only Poland," he declared to me only a few months before his death in 1935: and it was obvious that very large numbers of Poles agreed with him. He made enemies as well as friends, but I have heard some of his opponents longing for a man of his calibre to-day, when Poland again faces an acute crisis.

III

First in Poland's problems of re-settlement was that of the land.

One day the world will awake to the urgency of its peasant problem. Of its population, two-thirds are peasants; in Eastern Europe the proportion is three-quarters. The peasant has been exploited throughout history. We picture the French Revolution as a massacre of aristocrats, but two-thirds of the victims of the guillotine were peasants. In the Russian Revolution, peasants were shot down by Reds and Whites with equal enthusiasm.

The peasant is "not news." A few thousand urban workers stage a strike, and so reach the headlines, for their action causes inconvenience to many. The peasant does not strike; he is insufficiently organised. If he did, he would not occasion inconvenience, but starvation, and the world would have to bow to his will.

He has been grossly misrepresented in the writing of history—because the writers usually belonged to the urban bourgeois class. In travel books he is usually described as "picturesque." The

tourist booklets show him (or, more usually, his wife or daughter) in some gorgeous costume—which does, happily, exist in some parts of Europe. Yet the more usual attire of the peasant is ragged corduroys or their equivalent.

It is easy to misjudge his condition. Tourists are taken to carefully selected villages, where picturesque usages survive. Yet many a time I have been myself misled. I would go by chance into a peasant cottage in rural Poland, and be royally entertained. I might have gathered quite a wrong impression of the peasant's standard of living had I not appreciated his overwhelming code of hospitality, which bids him sacrifice his best for the entertainment of his visitor. The only way to estimate Polish village life is to stay in the village; a casual meal is no guide.

The peasant has few friends. He is despised and exploited even by his urban brother. It was significant that the new Russian state was one of "Workers and Peasants"—though the peasants outnumbered the factory workers by two to one. When Karl Marx spoke of the "toiling masses," he did not mean the peasants, who in practice work far harder than factory operatives: on the contrary, he referred to the peasants as "a separate class of barbarians." Martin Luther classed them with mad dogs!

In the Western industrial countries we are engaged in a clash between capital and labour. In countries like Poland the clash is between town and country. The urban worker tries to get the maximum prices for his goods, but insists upon cheap food. Thus the peasant can seldom afford to buy the town-made goods, and the worker loses his job. The "system" has been absurd in its lack of recognition of basic realities.

The general standard of life in Poland was not high. Colin Clark, the Australian economist, made some interesting calculations on the basis of the purchasing power of "real wages," for, naturally, the number of coins a man receives for his labour are no criterion of his comparative riches. Clark based his figures on an "international unit," and examined the period 1925-34. The highest material standard of life was attained in U.S.A. with an index figure of 1,381. The British figure, the highest in Europe, was 1,069; France, 686; Germany, 646; Russia, 320. The Polish figure for the whole country was 345, but for the peasant population was only two thirds of that of urban workers! Further, standards in eastern Poland were considerably lower than those in the west. This means that the Polish peasant in the eastern provinces existed on a standard of life expressed at about 250 in the international units. This is about level with Balkan standards.

One trouble, a feature of most peasant countries, was that of overcrowding. The density of Poland's rural population is two

and a half times that of France. At one time relief from population pressure was available in the form of emigration, but this halted abruptly in 1914, thereby dealing a severe blow to the peasant states.

The peasant has contributed liberally to his own disadvantages. That admirable quality, loyalty to the family, has intensified his problems. With a large family, no emigration, and little industry in the towns, the dying peasant would divide his farm among his sons. He would do it fairly—each boy must have a strip of arable land and a grazing meadow. Continue this process for a few generations, and the results are obvious. It is not merely that there are far too many dwarf properties in Poland, but most of them are ridiculously spread; I have seen a 10-acre farm comprised of forty tiny strips of land! The wastage on boundaries alone must be enormous, for each strip has a tiny path along its flanks. One of the first moves of the Polish Government was towards “co-massation”—grouping together dwarf holdings by suitable exchanges of strips. Yet it was always obvious that a bigger problem had still to be faced: the enlargement of the individual farms.

Even more urgent was the problem of the landless peasant. We have seen that, like all other countries of the time, Poland was once a region of large estates: if the labourers were not serfs, they were only a grade above them, for most of them were tied to the land by traditional usages and laws.

At all times, however, there were peasant farms in Poland. It is the age-old dream of the peasant to own his own farm. There were three processes whereby this might be accomplished. He might be granted a piece of land for outstanding personal service to his lord: he might, by a lifetime's pinching and saving, acquire it by purchase. Or, conversely, he might have become a peasant as the younger son of younger sons of a noble house.

Conditions were always very much better in German and Austrian Poland than in the Russian sector. Here serfdom was not finally abolished until 1861, and even then the peasant gained but little. But the dream persisted: it became bound up with the strong nationalism inherent in Poland: when Poland was free, then the peasants would get their land.

Thus the rulers were confronted with an urgent demand: it could only be satisfied by breaking up the great estates. Ideas as to the method differed. Some people favoured compulsory acquisition, with or without compensation: the landlords, naturally enough, held different opinions. Eventually a compromise was adopted, and a portion of the estates was parcelled out.

In the meantime, wearying of interminable debates on ways and means—this was before the days of the Pilsudski régime—the

peasants tackled the problem themselves. The war left the landlords in an economic plight: they had their houses and lands; but all their liquid assets had been rendered worthless by the slump in German, Austrian and Russian money. Thus they now had to sell something to live. Peasants who had hoarded gold pieces or American dollars in stockings now found themselves minor capitalists. In the first three years of the new Poland, over 200,000 peasants acquired their own land by normal purchase, quite apart from Government schemes.

When the census was taken in 1921, there were 3,264,000 farms in Poland, divided as follows:

2 hectares (5 acres) or less	1,109,000
2-5 hectares	1,002,000
5-20 hectares	1,045,000
20-100 hectares	89,000
Over 100 hectares	19,000

The small farms of under 100 hectares (250 acres) totalled nearly 60 per cent. of the arable land.

Between 1921 and 1939, 2,535,600 hectares from large estates were divided into small farms, or enlarging "dwarf" holdings settling about 698,400 peasant families. In addition, 4,993,700 hectares were consolidated, benefiting 768,700 families.

Another useful reform had dealt with the *servitudes*, most of them relics of Tsarist days. They included rights of way for cattle and vehicles, the right to collect timber, and pasturage facilities. In some districts they were so numerous and onerous as to be a real handicap to economic farming. Many of them were introduced immediately after the abolition of serfdom, the objective being to create discord between landlord and peasant! These were now abolished, consolidated or rationalised, to the benefit of all.

The bulk of the large estates remained in Eastern Poland, though many of them included large areas of forest and marshland. Poland's problem was still that of the small farm. The *minimum* size for a family should be 5 hectares, and although more than 300,000 dwarf farms had been increased in size, there still remained 700,000 of 5 acres or less. A peasant cannot live on 5 acres of mediocre land: he can only exist.

This problem of over-population is very serious, and we shall need to return to it again. Emigration would be a useful palliative, but is hardly likely to be realised. The most satisfactory solution would be an increased industrialisation in Poland, which would absorb the surplus labour of the villages. But, apart from this, there is one insistent demand on the urban worker, who is so often by his superior organisation the effective ruler of the country—to pay to the peasant a fair price for his goods. Until the

standard of living has been levelled up as between town and country, all other schemes must fail.

A second necessity is for intensive scientific research. Any genius who can show the peasant how to make a reasonable living out of a 10-acre farm will deserve the gratitude of mankind.

One of the keys to an efficient agricultural economy is communications. The fact that those of Poland are below standard is due to the ravages of two wars and to the fact that her systems were planned in the days of the Partitions—not to serve the purposes of Poland, but those of the occupying Powers. Thus the railways of north-west Poland were designed to carry produce to Berlin: those of the east, in Russian Poland, were mainly strategic in purpose and were grossly inadequate. There were no direct lines between Warsaw and many of the important provincial cities. These have now been built, but Poland has still only 8.5 miles of railway line per 100 square miles, compared with 12.5 in France; in roads the proportion is even more startling—the French figure is four times that of Poland. This, added to the superior industrialisation of France which has relieved the rural population of its pressure, explains the big difference in the comparative prosperity of the French and Polish peasants. Good crops are of little use unless they can be marketed.

A thousand times the peasant has revolted, but he has always been beaten. His revolts have been those of despair, not of ambition.

Few people have ever been really interested in his problems. Politicians have used him, and have failed him. His responsibilities and outlook have often been too local. He dislikes paying taxes, yet not even politicians could avoid taxing him when he forms the major part of the population. He has not been interested in collective farms, but preferred the pride of individual ownership; he was, however, capable of considerable steps towards co-operation with his fellows—an old peasant tradition. He is backward in the use of machinery, which would be uneconomical on so small a farm—yet he cannot hope to compete in price with the "wheat factories" of Canada or Argentina.

The inherent peasant conservatism has been a serious deterrent to his own progress. Yet he has one quality which marks him out from his urban brothers in their artificial conditions: he is indestructible. His civilisation cannot be destroyed until all of his kind have been wiped out of existence. It is based upon the spoken word, the handed-down tradition. An illiterate peasant may easily have a greater store of real knowledge than a university graduate. His memory, compared with that of the industrial mass-production worker, is formidable. He is versatile to a degree. Take away from the factory worker his machine, his cinema, his

pub and his shops, and he is lost. The peasant is self-contained. He knows no housing problems; he can design and build his own home with simple tools. He can weave cloth and make his own furniture: he is not dependent on factories or wages for the essentials of life.

After the scourge of war, he recovers more rapidly than the townsman. Economic depressions, wars and pestilences have brought him misery and famine, but have not destroyed him. The survival of the peasant is one of the most significant features of history: he is as eternal as the soil to which he is bound. There are signs that he is about to awake. If he rebels, the devastation of an atomic bomb will be small in comparison.

IV

Surplus population was one of the keys to Polish policy, and we are noting its effects to-day.

The devastation of the war, the world depression, and the small size of peasant holdings were potent factors towards peasant discontent. They were affected by the high birth-rate, which raised the problem of the disposal of surplus members of peasant families.

Prior to the First World War, emigration had supplied the necessary relief. Seven million Poles went abroad, mostly to America. Now this avenue was stopped. However, nearly a million Poles found employment in France—as miners, farm labourers or in clearing up war damage. In addition, peasants' sons went to neighbouring countries, like Germany and Lithuania, as seasonal workers, and the sums they earned, with the remittances from Poles overseas, went some way to balance Polish economy.

In the years 1919-38, over 2,057,000 Poles emigrated: it would have been larger but for the quotas imposed by U.S.A. In compensation, however, 1,181,000 Poles came to Poland from Russian territory.

The world slump, however, not merely stopped the flow of outward migrants: Poles abroad began to return. Thus the depressing effects upon Polish economy were accentuated. Statistically, the situation was not as bad as in industrial countries, but a peasant land is plagued by "disguised unemployment"—when five or six members of a family work a farm which could be operated by two and all share the consequent income.

The land reforms of the inter-war years were still incomplete, and in any case could never supply the answer to the peasant problem. Even if all the land in the country had been parcelled out, there would still have been millions of peasants without farms

Had the collective farm system been adopted, with its higher efficiency and greater use of machinery, the number of unemployed would have been higher still.

This point is of importance. Poland had to be more concerned with employment than with economic efficiency.

Once I talked with a Hungarian landlord as a number of his labourers trudged behind ox-drawn ploughs.

"Your argument is sound," he said. "I agree that one man with a tractor could do the work of twenty men with ox-ploughs. I could buy the tractor; it would pay me handsomely. But what would happen to the nineteen men thrown out of work?"

The situation in Poland was almost similar. A 500-acre estate, in one unit and with ample machinery, could be worked by ten men. Divided into peasant farms of 10 acres, it gave employment to fifty. In results the small farms could not compete with the vast granaries of Canada or the Argentine, but Poland had little or no choice. The pressure of over-population was the governing factor in all decisions.

As palliatives, the Poles looked to emigration to other countries and to colonies. Control of the former was out of their hands, and the movement tended to decline rather than to enlarge. In any case, even when at its height Polish emigration never exceeded one-half of the annual increase in population. And Poland was rather late in the day for the creation of a Polish Empire! There was, however, intense interest in Palestine. The outlook was not necessarily anti-Semitic: if a big proportion of the 3 million Polish Jews could be cleared to Palestine, there would be more room in Poland for the Poles.

As a more permanent solution, industrialisation was the first and most obvious: within the limits of Poland's resources, it was well tackled. An intensification of agricultural education was also essential. Yet, given all these, it is doubtful if Poland's problems could have been solved within her own frontiers. Hence the intense interest in the new boundaries, which have moved westward, completely reorientating Polish economy in the process. This is a subject to which we must return.

V

The foreign policy of a country is suggested by its history, but dominated by its geography.

In the early days of the new Poland, the rulers had lived under German, Austrian or Russian rule, and were often governed by sympathies or prejudices—usually the latter. Thus they pulled in different directions. However, since the Austrian Empire had

disappeared, and Germany and Russia were temporarily subdued, Poland's lack of decisive foreign policy was not as serious as it might have been.

Under Pilsudski, a firmer line was pursued. His predecessors had talked amiably about the League of Nations, whose ideals agreed with Polish traditions, and which proclaimed the protection of the smaller Powers as one of its powerful objectives. Pilsudski, however, believed that the Great Powers would never entrust their destinies to the League, that it was an artificial creation, born of tiredness of war rather than on constructive ideas for the future, and that it would crack at the first severe strain. He argued that it was only a question of years before Germany and Russia recovered their strength; then, it was certain, they would revive their old ambitions in Poland. And neither of them was a member of the League!

His first alliance was logical. France had just as much cause to fear a revived Germany, and Poland was an obvious partner. Turning to the east, Pilsudski made a similar alliance with Roumania, since both countries had cause to distrust Russian acquisitive ideas.

Gradually, however, Pilsudski lost confidence in France. He was concerned at its political instability. There were many personal clashes, for the French appeared to treat the Poles as their very junior partners. Then, in 1925, France and Germany confirmed their common frontiers, but Germany was not prepared to guarantee her eastern frontiers. The inference was obvious, and Pilsudski was furious at the French for their "desertion" of the policy of holding Germany down.

The policy of appeasement had already begun to dominate Western European policies. The rise of Hitler to power was accepted almost complacently, but not by Pilsudski. Within a month he proposed to France a march into Germany: if the Nazi menace were not extirpated, it would inevitably lead to war.

The move would have succeeded—for in February, 1933, Germany was almost helpless. But Pilsudski's suggestion found no backing in France or Britain—and certainly none in U.S.A. Instead of a preventive war, France, Britain and Italy formed a four-power pact with Germany: it mentioned the possibility of the revision of the peace treaties, which could only be done at Poland's expense.

"If you can't stand up to your neighbour, make friends with him," was the argument Pilsudski used to me to justify his subsequent action—his ten-year pact of non-aggression with Germany, made in January, 1934. He did not pretend to trust Hitler, but the Pact ought to give Poland a breathing space, and in that time other countries might have time to appreciate the Ger-

man menace. He resisted all Hitler's attempts to convert the Pact into a military alliance against Russia.

Pilsudski did not pretend to trust Russia either: his old prejudices were too deeply rooted. He would never march against the Russians, but he was very suspicious that, when they had recovered, they would march against him. He endeavoured to build up a combination of smaller states, from the Baltic to the Balkans, which would keep Germany and Russia apart. Neither of his neighbours accepted his viewpoint: the Germans saw in it a forcible restraint on their eastern ambitions, while the Russians interpreted it as an offensive coalition against them—or, at least, as a *cordon sanitaire* designed to keep Russia out of Central Europe.

It is an unfortunate fact that the security of the smaller states of Eastern Europe has never been certain unless Russia and Germany have been kept apart, both geographically and politically. Whenever the two giants came together, there was trouble for their smaller neighbours: history offers a dozen examples, from the partitions of Poland to the absorption of the Baltic States. Russia and Germany have had inherent suspicions of each other: in such an atmosphere neither would allow the other to aggrandise itself; but on the rare occasions when the two Powers came together, they became aggressors by mutual consent, to the discomfiture of their neighbours. This unhappy historical tendency was well noted in Poland and similar powers, where the basis of policy was to play off Russia against Germany.

In his foreign policy, Pilsudski commanded the adherence of the greater part of Polish opinion, determined upon peace, but also on the maintenance of a free Poland. Suspicion of Russia was apparent everywhere—in most other countries beside Poland, of course—and even when the Soviet dropped its missionary ideas and settled down to the reorganisation of its own vast territories, old ideas did not readily disappear.

Nevertheless, all German bribes were steadfastly resisted. Five times Poland was invited to march with Germany against Russia—in February, 1935, Goering went so far as to offer to Pilsudski the command of the combined German-Polish armies! These facts are worth recalling to-day, when some people blame the Poles very bitterly for not making an accommodation with Russia prior to 1939. Of course the Poles were wrong: but so were the British and French—and, for that matter, the Russians.

The Poles who saw the German menace very clearly were most reluctant to approach Russia. The Third International could be ignored in distant lands like Britain or U.S.A., but not in Poland. On August 20th, 1935, it announced a new tactical device: hitherto local Communists had attacked Socialists as fiercely as Conservatives, but now they were to infiltrate and collaborate,

forming "Popular Fronts." The results were soon seen in France and Spain, and would have been followed in Poland but for the firm control of the semi-authoritarian Government. The argument was that Spain could become Communist, but remain Spain: a communist Poland would become a Russian province.

No one could deny the great work which Pilsudski did for Poland, but it is a weakness of men of dictatorial temperament that they fail to recognise when their work is done. In a really democratic community, the electorate can remind them, but Poland was not the only country in Europe where the strong man exercised his power over-long. When I saw Pilsudski in 1934 it was impossible to miss the force of his personality or the sincerity of his purpose. He was quite different from the vainglorious boaster type of dictator. Yet it seemed to me that by his own self-limitations he had harmed his reputation and objective. His lifelong fight was for freedom and welfare in Poland, yet a narrow and purely national view can often provoke the very events which nullify its aim. Because he had thought only of Poland, because his whole life had been one long battle for a single end, he missed too many indications lying outside, but near to his narrow viewpoint.

The obvious success of his home policy persuaded him that he was right. He had taken over a country torn with pseudo-democratic dissensions: he had erected a solid state, an economic and political organisation in full working order. He did not see that his task was completed when he had abolished the chaos he faced. Few great men are great enough to surrender authority willingly.

Thus he missed the moment when Poland could have gradually but legitimately returned to more democratic methods of control. He had an instinctive distrust of opposition, and would scarcely admit its honesty: he was over loyal to men who had stood beside him throughout his long struggle, not appreciating that a gallant soldier does not necessarily make a good administrator.

Similarly, in foreign affairs, he had kept Poland free during the vital early years of her independence. He did not see that his policy of balancing Germany against Russia was successful while both countries were weak, but could lead to disaster now that both were gathering strength, and that neither had any inherent friendship towards Poland. Yet Pilsudski's greatest failing was not the policy he pursued during his own lifetime: it was the fact that he bequeathed the same policy to his successors.

Marshal Edward Smigly-Rydz, Pilsudski's nominated successor, was a man of humble origin, a gallant soldier who had held aloof from politics. He never pretended to genius; he was popular in the Army, but almost unknown to most Poles. It was soon obvious that he was right out of his depth in the stormy wars of international affairs: in this at least he was among a large and distinguished company.

His adviser, Colonel Beck, was another of Pilsudski's loyalties: a man of narrow vision and reticent character, he was out of touch with Polish sentiment. He was especially unpopular when he allowed the historic friendship with France to cool.

Now until 1938 it is probable that Russia was the first object of Polish suspicion. The Treaty of Riga ended a war, but it could not dispel a hostility which had persisted for centuries. The exuberance of the early Bolshevik creed aroused wide apprehensions: when the Russians marched into Poland in 1920 there followed a complete Polish Government, ready to be installed and to make the country into a Soviet republic. Poles remembered these things long after they had been forgotten in Britain and U.S.A., or, maybe, even in Russia.

But in 1938 the German aggression opened Polish eyes, and Germany was revealed as her prime enemy—for it was quite obvious to the most superficial observer that Poland was to be the next victim. Nevertheless, few Poles were prepared to make the choice which the occasion demanded: the time had come when Poland had to line up with one of her neighbours. Smigly-Rydz and Beck consistently refused Germany's tempting offers of an offensive alliance against Russia, but they declined to move any nearer to Russia. True, relations were correct and were covered by a non-aggression pact: on paper, at least, the Russian-Polish situation was amply protected.

The Russian Intelligence service is usually good, and they must have been well informed about German approaches to Poland. Thus they were well entitled to look suspiciously at Warsaw, but one would have expected that a different outlook would have prevailed in 1939, when it was clear to any observer that Poland had indeed rejected all German offers, and was prepared to stand and fight.

The events of the last year of peace are of interest rather than of importance. The Poles attracted a great deal of well-deserved criticism when they seized Teschen at the moment of Czechoslovakia's distress—we shall consider this in the following chapter but the very people who are loudest in their indignation against the Poles for kicking a neighbour who was down forget

whose action put Czechoslovakia in that unfortunate position!

Then, in January, 1939, Hitler made a final offer to Colonel Beck. It was refused. Since Germany must have a friend in the East, Hitler turned to Russia. It is certain that most Poles failed to recognise the seriousness of the situation. They could not conceive that the astute Stalin would make a pact with the man who had sworn to destroy him. They believed that relations between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia were so strained that Poland was secure. At this time, it will be remembered, few people in the world had the slightest inkling of the subsequent German-Russian Pact.

Yet the German seizure of Czechoslovakia on March 15th, 1939, made the issue completely clear. Eleven days later Hitler formally demanded Danzig. Now the Poles knew their fate: someone had to be the first to say "No" to Hitler.

Britain and France promptly gave a guarantee to Poland; it had electric effects, and fortified the Poles in their determination to resist. There were statesmen in the West who thought that the pact would scare Hitler away from further aggressions, but a gentleman is always at a disadvantage in dealing with a gangster, who does not halt at "things which are not done."

The pact of guarantee, to mean anything, must have the backing of Russia. A British-French mission went to Moscow. The auspices seemed hopeful, for Russia had bitterly condemned the rape of Czechoslovakia, and her armies were quite openly formed and trained to resist German aggression. Nevertheless, intense difficulties developed. The Russians demanded the right to occupy the little Baltic States, lest the Germans should do so first. As this was virtually the same thing which Hitler had demanded of Poland, Britain and France could not agree.

Further, the Poles were apprehensive about a Russian alliance. They were no more anxious to have Russians than Germans on their soil. The last time both came into Poland was in 1772, and they stayed until 1918, and were then expelled by force! The Polish anxieties were understandable enough, but even at this stage their leaders did not realise the necessity for a clear decision.

To the countries of the West, the Comintern was a vague and distant menace. To the Poles, it was near and distinct. Since it was Poland in 1920 had prevented the spread of Communism to the west, "the international proletariat must consider as its task the smashing of capitalistic Poland and turning it into a Soviet Republic." To the Poles these words were significant.

It is probable that the Allied negotiations were doomed from the beginning. Astute observers had noted that in his speeches since January, 1939, Hitler had omitted his usual denunciations of Bolshevism. Then, in the following March, Stalin denounced

Britain and France: apparently they had accused Germany of forming a sub-Carpathian state from the wreck of Czechoslovakia, and he claimed that their intention was to poison German-Russian relations. This attitude he condemned very strongly.

So the negotiations in Moscow dragged. The greatest hindrance was the atmosphere of suspicion which had clouded relations between East and West for twenty years. The Russians had been legitimately annoyed because they had been ignored at Munich: Hitler had refused to sit at the same table with them. Now they were in a position to make their own terms, and they made them onerous.

Still incredulous that Hitler would deliberately plunge the world into war, the British and French leaders debated. The Germans acted: no price was too high for them to avoid a war on two fronts. The Russians, negotiating with both parties at once, accepted the better offer. It is probable that they believed that Britain and France would not fight, but would stage a second Munich, thus leaving Russia to face Germany alone. Suspicion clouded every issue. On August 22nd, 1939, a new pact between Russia and Germany was announced.

There were people in England who would willingly have turned the war east—"let Germany and Russia exhaust each other." The Russians now cynically turned the argument—"let Germany and the Western democracies exhaust each other." For the moment the Russian diplomatic triumph was complete, but to-day most Russians admit frankly that their decision was wrong.

It is doubtful if the war could have been finally halted, except by the firmest alliance between Russia and the West. The Russian-German Pact merely precipitated it. Already there had been the usual series of faked "incidents" on the frontiers. On September 1st, 1939, the German armies moved openly to the attack.

The events I have briefly outlined were only tactical moves to get the German people into the mood for battle, or to provoke the Poles to ill-judged excesses. For the causes of the war, including the Russian-German Pact which precipitated it, we must go back very much further. We have already seen the widespread effects of Polish history on present-day events. We must now examine the many causes of dispute between Poland and her neighbours, for they figure largely among the occasions for the new conflict. Most of them were legacies from the settlement following the War of 1914-18. The War of 1939-45 was only a second round in a gigantic contest. We ought to examine the root discontents very carefully, for a third round might mean the end of our civilisation.

THE PROBLEMS OF POLAND

I

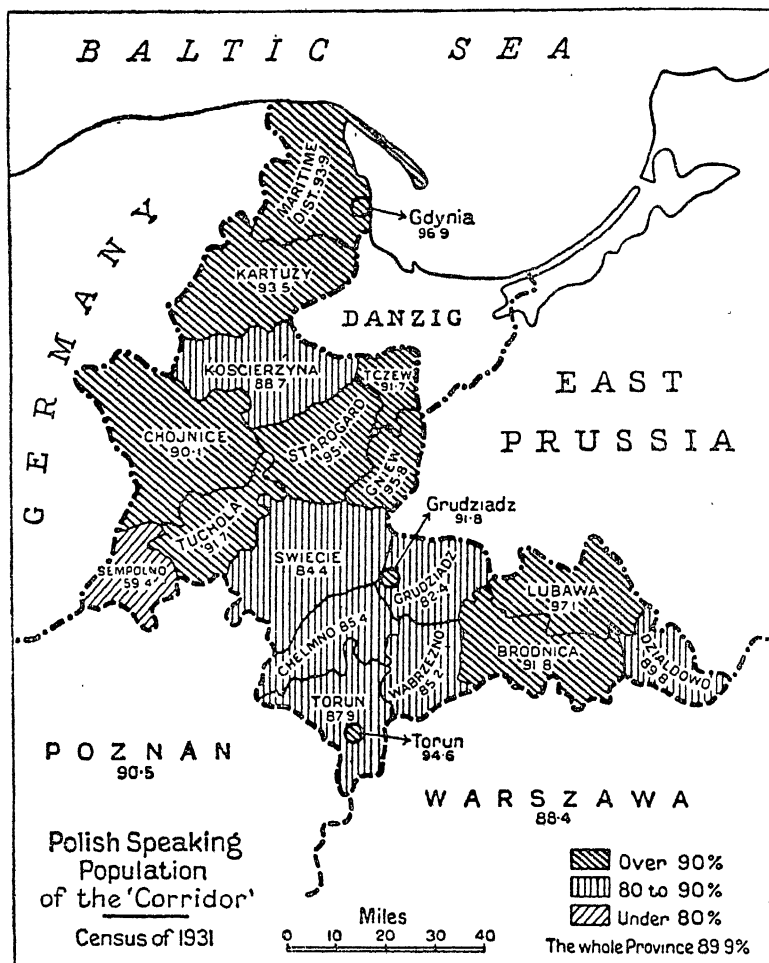
OUR OUTLOOK ON PROBLEMS changes considerably as they recede towards antiquity. Some, once so vivid, now appear trivial; others, once ignored, now become desperate and urgent. As in private experience, so in public affairs. During the summer of 1939 men the world over were vehemently discussing the Polish "Corridor," but had never heard of the Curzon Line; to-day the relative importance is abruptly reversed. Yet we must give at least a passing glance to problems which are no longer urgent, for there is no guarantee that they are no longer recurrent.

The statesmen at Paris in 1919 faced the implementation of President Wilson's Thirteenth Point: "An independent Polish State shall be erected, which shall include all territory with an indisputably Polish population, to which a free and safe access to the sea shall be given, and whose economic and territorial integrity will be assured by international treaties."

The first essential was the determination of the frontiers between Poland and Germany. We have glanced at the centuries-old struggle between Slav and Teuton: it was obvious that where they met on the European plain, a confused population was inevitable. It was quite impossible to draw any line and to say: "All the people living to the west of this line are Germans, all those to the east are Poles." Had your frontier a thousand curves and angles, it would still leave large numbers of Germans and Poles on the wrong side.

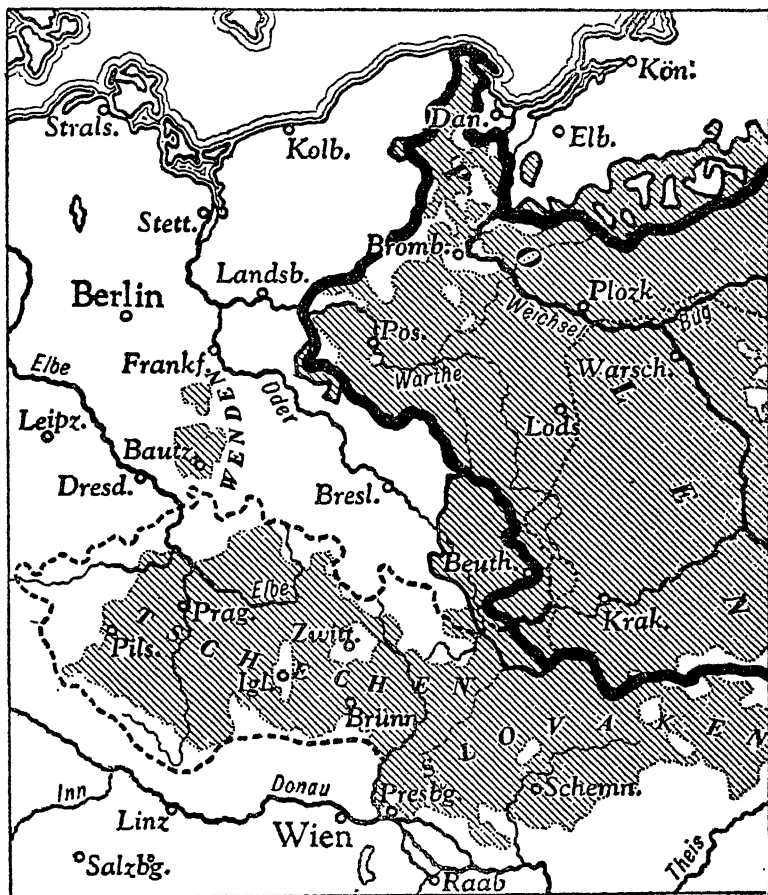
In the main, therefore, the statesmen re-drawing the map of Europe went back to the boundary prevailing at the time of the German aggression of 1772. Then the Poles had an access to the sea—a strip of territory adjoining the Vistula. This was restored to the re-born Poland: an enterprising German propagandist promptly dubbed it the Polish "Corridor," thereby implying that it was an artificial creation; innocent "publicists" in other countries followed his picturesque lead, and an admirable cause for German discontent was established. The publicists of the day would have done a better job for world peace had they pointed out consistently, to Germans as well as their own people, that the "Corridor" area was a historic Polish province, seized by Prussia in 1772, and after 140 years still inhabited by Poles!

It is indicative of the persistent ingenuity of German propaganda that many people to this day do not realise that the Polish "Corridor" was Polish. By the German figures of 1910, the population consisted of 550,000 Poles to 440,000 Germans. The



latter figure, however, included the hordes of troops and officials who were an invariable accompaniment of any German administration. When they and their families were withdrawn in 1919, the German proportion fell from 40 per cent. to 12 per cent.

Indeed, since Poland included large minorities, not merely was Pomorze ("The Corridor") Polish, it was actually the most thoroughly Polish corner of Poland!



A German map for school use, published in 1909. The shaded areas represent territory inhabited by absolute Slav majorities. A thick black line has been added to show the 1919-39 frontiers of Poland. It is interesting to note not only the Slav nature of the Corridor population, but that of the southern portion of East Prussia, and of Upper Silesia.

(The Germans claimed that the Polish figures included 110,000 Kashubians who were not really Poles at all. Yet the Kashubians have always classed themselves as Poles, speak a Po-

lish dialect, and were considered as Poles by the Germans until it became more convenient to class them as Germans.)

Thus there was no question of an artificial access to the sea. The Poles could have claimed the "Corridor" region on a basis other than historic—"which shall include all territory with an indisputably Polish population."

Nevertheless, the blow to German pride was apparent. Much calmer propagandists than Hitler could point with indignation to the map, showing the historic German province of East Prussia cut off from its motherland by an artificial "Corridor." The simplest mind could understand this argument: and all the simple minds were not located in Germany.

II

Pomorze was indisputably Polish, but Danzig was not.

The Teutonic Knights, in the vagaries of their settlements, spread only lightly over Pomorze, but established themselves firmly in the Polish port of Danzig. This was in 1308. Their hold lasted for less than a century and a half; as the Knights rotted in their own corruption, in 1455 Danzig offered itself to the Kingdom of Poland, though by this time it included a large population of German merchants.

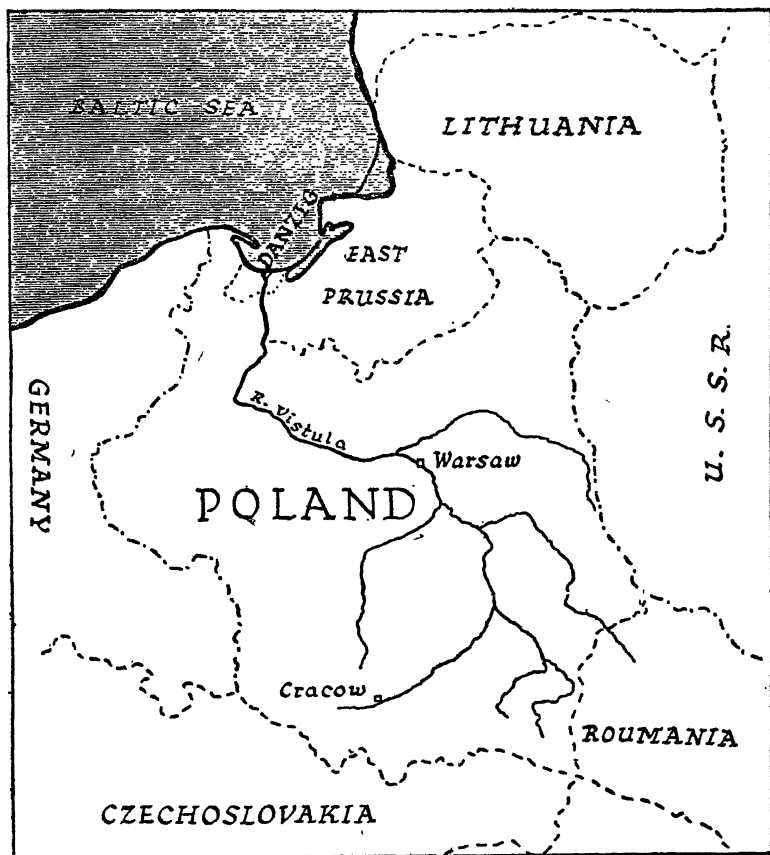
A glance at the map shows that the move was economically wise. Danzig is Poland's natural port, at the mouth of the River Vistula, the main artery of the country. The Polish Kings granted to Danzig the rights of a free city: it prospered as a member of the Hanseatic League, but it was part of Poland, and returned members to the Polish Parliament. Then, in the First Partition of 1772, it was forcibly seized by Prussia.

Thus the statesmen at Versailles were in a dilemma. They had adopted the excellent ethnic principle that people should be ruled by their own race as far as was humanly possible. On this basis Danzig was German, despite its considerable Polish minority and the fact that thousands of Germans were the descendants of Germanised Poles. At the same time, Poland was dependent upon the port to an extent unequalled in any other country of Europe, for the Vistula was the main artery of the country. Thus a compromise was arranged: Danzig became a Free City, with local self-rule, but within the Polish economic orbit. A League of Nations High Commissioner was appointed to co-ordinate the city's affairs.

The compromise could have worked with the co-operation of both sides. This never matured—on the German side it was never intended. German dockers even claimed the right to decide which cargoes should or should not be unloaded in Danzig!

The Polish reply was emphatic. Their fifty miles of sandy coastline offered no natural harbour, so they created an artificial one. Within twenty years a fishing village became the port of Gdynia, with a population of 120,000 and the finest handling facilities in the Baltic.

The jealousy of Danzig for its new rival was matched by the



Danzig and the Vistula

pride of the Poles in Gdynia, the first material achievement of the re-born state. Actually, there was plenty of work for both ports. Even with Gdynia at its peak, Danzig still handled 7 million tons of merchandise annually, compared with little over 2

million prior to 1914, when it served only the Prussian hinterland. Had not the war intervened, indeed, Danzig and Gdynia combined would have been insufficient for Poland's growing trade.

The stubborn Germanism of the Danzigers, and the attitude of the Poles, so often arbitrary, generated an atmosphere in which the essential spirit of compromise could scarcely flourish. After the rise of Hitler, the situation was frequently alarming, and long before 1939 it was obvious that Danzig could provide the occasion for the inevitable break. Transport difficulties across the "Corridor" were grossly exaggerated by German propaganda; Polish rights in Danzig became "terrorist insults." The German grievance was so simple: a child's atlas was sufficient to prove it; with great persistence, it was blazoned to the German world, and beyond.

The people of Danzig had their chance. Had they loyally accepted their status as a Free City, and had they co-operated with Polish commerce, then they would have become very prosperous. They chose instead the narrow path of nationalist irredentism, and by their actions precipitated the Second World War. They can scarcely grumble if they are not given another chance.

III

The Polish "Corridor" affected German pride, but Silesia touched the German pocket.

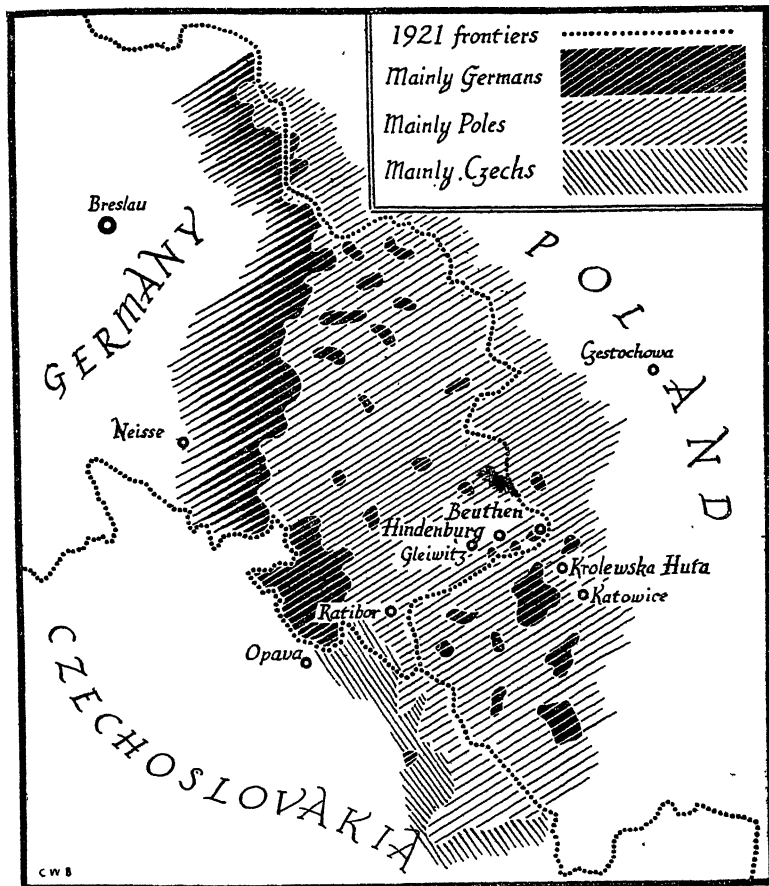
The "Corridor" area was no more than a stretch of pleasant farmland, freely interspersed with lakes. Silesia, far to the south-west, was an important mining and industrial area. For his propaganda campaigns, Hitler raved about the injustices of the "Corridor" and Danzig, but the region which he coveted primarily was Upper Silesia.

In the days of tribal settlement, 1,000 years ago, the province now known as Silesia was occupied by Poles. Indeed, it was for long known as *Staropolska*, or Old Poland. Early in the fourteenth century, however, it was conquered by the King of Bohemia, though its princes and people continually stressed their racial kinship with their Polish neighbours. Eventually Bohemia became absorbed in the Austrian Empire, and with it, of course, Silesia.

In 1742 Frederick II of Prussia seized the province by force. "I take what I want. Then I can always find clever lawyers to prove that it is mine," he said, cynically. An intense policy of Germanisation followed. This was naturally more pronounced in Lower Silesia, the western portion of the province, bordering Germany proper. Special inducements were offered to German

settlers—grants of land and exemption from taxation. Gradually the character of the countryside changed.

In Upper Silesia, however, the population retained its Polish form. Even German censuses, not above suspicion, never showed less than 60 per cent. of Poles. This was the more remarkable



Distribution of Racial Minorities in Silesia

because the province had seen a large German immigration following the discovery of extensive deposits of coal and other minerals: a considerable industry sprang up. By the end of the last century the rural population of Upper Silesia was still largely

Polish, but in the towns the races were very mixed—in some cases the Germans actually predominated.

After the First World War, Poland claimed the whole of Upper Silesia, and her rights were admitted at Versailles. Subsequently, however, it was decided to hold a plebiscite—in March, 1921. This has been bitterly debated ever since, and can serve as an object lesson for those who believe that a popular vote is a panacea for all ethnic troubles. A plebiscite is only a decisive argument when it is held under conditions which are not merely fair and just, but which are recognised as fair and just by the contesting parties. These conditions did not apply in Silesia.

Both sides were not content with normal propagandist activity, but resorted to terrorist methods. The Polish leader, Korfanty, attempted to seize the whole province by force: on their part, the Germans sent armed troops, in civilian clothes, to secure Upper Silesia for the Reich. The unfortunate population suffered in the subsequent clashes: nor did the strained atmosphere of guerrilla war impel that calm judgment which the moment demanded.

Allied troops were sent to see fair play, but the power of such forces is limited—they can only ensure that violence does not prevail at the actual polls. Nevertheless, the result was a surprise. Even German figures showed that 57 per cent. of the population of Upper Silesia was Polish; in the counties east of the Oder the average was 75 per cent. Yet, in the plebiscite, 706,820 votes were cast for Germany against 479,414 for Poland—about 40 per cent. of the whole.

There were many explanations. In the towns, the employers were exclusively German, and, as often happens, it was not unknown for their influence on their workpeople to be applied undemocratically. For generations there had been very few Polish schools, and the process of Germanisation had evidently proceeded further than the Poles had appreciated. Despite the presence of Allied troops, the area was controlled by German executive authority, and not all the officials attempted to restrain the terrorists of their own race.

These, however, are explanations and excuses. The Poles had a real grievance in one feature of the plebiscite. Not only residents, but people born in Upper Silesia were allowed to vote. In the nature of things, most of these were German—the children of German officials or soldiers who happened to be stationed in Upper Silesia at the time, but who had no ethnic connection with the province. The “migrant” voters were vigorously hunted up in every corner of Germany and conveyed to the polls. Of the 192,208 “migrants,” no less than 182,288 voted for Germany. Deducting the whole “migrant” vote, the figures for the votes of

permanent inhabitants would have been 524,450 for Germany and 469,376 for Poland—47·3 per cent. of the whole.

In the rural areas 244,000 voted for Germany against 410,000 for Poland. In the towns the Poles were very dubious about many of the figures announced, and subsequent events confirmed their suspicions. It was not merely that towns which on the German census of 1910 had shown a 75 per cent. Polish population now returned only a 40 per cent. Polish vote: these same towns, in the next German census of 1925, again showed about 70 per cent. of the population as Polish.¹

On the basis of the plebiscite result, the Germans promptly claimed the entire province. A better argument was that Upper Silesia had been developed as one economic whole, and that everybody would suffer if it were partitioned. Economics cannot compete with nationalism, however, and the League of Nations Council decided upon the division of Upper Silesia.

It was quite impossible to make any partition which would satisfy everybody. A neutral Commission did its best, but was violently criticised by both sides. In the final award, Poland received only about one-third of the total area, but it included nearly three-quarters of the mines and foundries of the province. The ethnic jumble was only partially sorted out, for 263,701 Germans were living in the territory transferred to Poland, while 625,596 Poles remained in Germany.²

An arbitrary frontier always leaves confusion in its train. A German town discovered that its waterworks were now in Poland; a factory was sited in Germany, but its offices—a hundred yards away—were in Poland! It will be appreciated what use of these "grievances" was made by German propagandists. In actual practice, the situation was not as bad as it seemed—it seldom is: the League of Nations arranged that for fifteen years local rail-

¹ An interesting examination of the relative statistics will be found in *The Problem of Upper Silesia*, by Robert Machray.

² The following additional statistics may be useful, for the argument about Upper Silesia may well be revived:

	Germany	Poland
Area allocated	9,714 sq. km.	3,221 sq. km.
Population	1,480,925	1,131,543
Population per square kilometre	152·6	351·3
Coal mines	14	53
Zinc and lead mines	5	10
Furnaces, steel works and rolling mills	26	64
Production (in 1913)		
Coal	11,090,908	31,907,906
Pig iron	381,318	613,283
Steel	354,865	1,049,545
Zinc	3,935	201,932
Lead	15,300	57,272

ways should work under a joint committee, and products were to pass from one country to another without duty. This apparently makeshift arrangement worked very well.

Nevertheless, no German ever pretended to accept the situation. Long before the rise of Hitler, publicists were stirring up bitterness, and every casual incident in Polish Silesia was magnified into an accusation of organised oppression. Because German propaganda was much more efficient than Polish, we heard far more of the woes of the 263,701 Germans in Poland than of those of the 625,596 Poles in Germany. These latter were never forgotten in Poland, however. Their treatment was not conciliatory; the number of Polish schools was reduced almost to vanishing point: in 1936 there were 83,000 Polish children in German Upper Silesia, but only ninety-six of them attended Polish schools—against 16,500 Germans in their own schools in the Polish part of the province. The policy of Germanisation continued unabated but was more fiercely resisted now that the Poles had their own nation as a supporting neighbour.

Thus it was always certain that, at the right moment, Poland would claim the remainder of Upper Silesia. In the event, this was to prove only the beginning. A little German moderation during the inter-war years might have saved them from disaster. But again it should not be forgotten that while Hitler raved about the "Corridor," his eyes were fixed on Upper Silesia.

Mr. Lloyd George was adverse to handing over any part of Upper Silesia to the Poles. In his picturesque way, he said that it would be like giving a clock to a monkey. He was proved to be quite wrong, for the Poles tackled their portion of the province, not only with energy, but with efficiency.

IV

Mr. Neville Chamberlain once described Czechoslovakia as "that far-away country of which we know so little." And even Mr. Lloyd George, whose volatile outlook was at least very much wider, admitted frankly in the House of Commons that he had never heard of Teschen. Probably few of the members who listened to him had ever heard of it, either, but they were destined to hear a lot about it later. Indeed, the Polish-Czech quarrel over Teschen was one of the tragedies which made possible the Second World War.

We have seen that no land frontier is a perfect ethnic boundary. Where races meet, they mix. This happened easily among the Poles and Czechs, cousin members of the same family of Western Slavs. Even the Carpathian Mountains do not form a natural boundary. About their culminating heights, the Tatras, live a

highland tribe, the Goorals, who are almost a connecting link between Poles and Czechs. They inhabit valleys on both sides of the frontier, but have never occasioned any trouble—indeed, the Tatra area was covered by a most sensible arrangement, whereby men might wander at will. Why, then, this bitter quarrel over Teschen?

The answer lies in its economic importance. Its area is only about 850 square miles, but it is very rich in mineral resources. Its population was very mixed: as far back as the ninth century its possession had been disputed by Bohemian and Polish rulers. Now that its considerable economic wealth had been exploited, it was claimed in 1919 by both Poland and Czechoslovakia.

They agreed to settle the dispute amicably. But in January Poland appeared to jump her claim by electing members for Teschen to the Polish Parliament. The Czech reply was to occupy the duchy and to hold it by force. The tension was serious. Ethnically each country had a good debating case, for the population was hopelessly mixed.

Eventually the territory was divided: the town of Teschen itself was cut in two. Accepting the compromise, the Poles complained that they had had the worse of the deal, for thousands of Poles remained on the wrong side of the frontier. Relations between the two countries remained absurdly strained: Poles never ceased to declaim against the Czech occupation of Teschen by force. Yet, when an opportune moment arrived, they proceeded to use the same method themselves!

At the height of the Sudeten crisis of 1938, when the Czechs were deserted by their allies, the Poles presented an ultimatum which could scarcely be resisted, and marched in to the occupation of the central section of Teschen. The resentment of the Czechs can be well imagined, and it persists to this day.

Impetuous nationalists in all countries are often the greatest dangers to their own cause. Had they tried, the Polish and Czech patriots who disputed over Teschen could not have done more to make smooth the Nazi path of aggression. As it was, Hitler was able to play off one against the other with consummate ease. Yet the Poles and Czechs were cousins: a firm alliance would have been natural, and very wise. It might have frustrated German ideas of expansion to the East.

(But it would have been unpopular in Russia, where any such project was regarded as the basis of a *cordon sanitaire* directed against the Soviet.)

All over the world men condemned Poland's action in kicking Czechoslovakia while she was down. They were right, but I have argued that some of them might have asked who caused the downfall of Czechoslovakia. The people who were loudest in their

condemnation of Poland were those who praised vociferously the "settlement" at Munich, which alone made possible the Polish action. An uneasy conscience generally seeks relief by directing blame elsewhere.

The Polish excuse for their forceful action was the necessity for keeping the Nazis out of Teschen. It was copied by the Russians when they occupied the Baltic States in 1940.

At least the Poles and the Czechs appeared to learn from their misfortunes. By 1939 they were brothers-in-arms, fellow victims of German aggression. As compared with the events of the day, Teschen appeared as no more than a trifle. The leaders got together and made statesmanlike moves. It was not merely a question of forming a Polish-Czech alliance: Poland and Czechoslovakia were to enter into full federal unity. Committees were appointed to work out the detailed plans, to be put into operation immediately after victory.

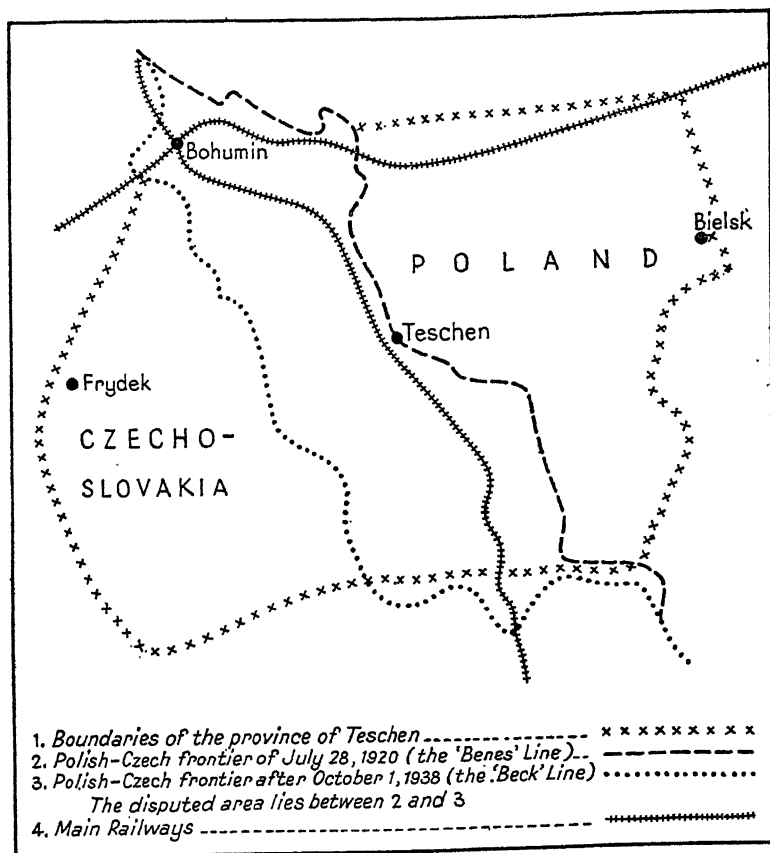
Their task was interrupted by the German attack on Russia in June, 1941. Russian influence in Czechoslovakia had always been strong, especially after Munich, and before the Russian-German Pact of 1939. With the Soviet as an ally of both Poland and Czechoslovakia, it might have been thought that an additional bond had been created. But Russia had always been nervous about alliances between her neighbours: whatever their basis they were interpreted as potentially directed against the Soviet Union. Thus Russia now frowned upon the proposed federation, and her influence in Czechoslovakia was strong enough to cancel the project.

This was a retrograde step, and in some form or other the idea may be revived. But, short of a federation, the problem of Teschen has returned to its old position as a leading disturbant of Polish-Czech relations. There are some people who can see no end to territorial controversies until the whole of Europe is under one rule, who believe that if all nations adopted the same ideology, then nationalism would lose its force. To date there is little in history to support this view. As I write, Poland is ruled by a largely Communist, Russian-dominated Government: Russian influence in Czechoslovakia is only a shade less powerful and practical. Yet Poland and Czechoslovakia are still wrangling bitterly over Teschen!

The map on p. 79 shows the area of dispute. To the east, up as far as the town of Teschen itself, the population is entirely Polish: the western section is predominantly Czech. The dispute rages over the central area—between the "Beneš Line," which was adopted in July, 1920, and the "Beck Line," which represents the limit of the Polish advance in October, 1938. Its area is 349 square miles, and its population is 227,000. By the Austrian cen-

sus of 1910 this consisted of 69.3 per cent. Poles, 18.2 per cent. Czechs and 12.4 per cent. Germans. These percentages have since changed, and Czech figures claim that there are now only 34 per cent. of Poles, but this figure is not accepted in Poland.

The Czech claim is dominated by the economic wealth of the tiny area. A great part of Czech industry depends on the coal of



the Karvina Basin—its output of 7,500,000 tons a year is comparatively small in Poland, with its potential of 60 million tons a year, but a great deal to Czechoslovakia, which otherwise can command only 9 million tons. A second and important argument is that a main railway line from Bohemia to Slovakia runs right across the territory.

After the defeat of Germany the Poles advanced only to the "Beneš Line"—the legal frontier from 1920 to 1938. They were full of complaints, however, that Poles in the other sections were being ill-treated by Czech officials. A situation which might have become dangerous was averted by the good sense of the two Governments, but the conflicting viewpoints have still to be reconciled.

It may be that the idea of a closer bond between Poland and Czechoslovakia has not been finally dispelled. There have been hints of a customs union between Roumania and Hungary, under Russian protection. If the Russians have no objection to this, it is difficult to see why they should oppose some form of Polish-Czech union.

This is probably the only permanent solution to a problem like that of Teschen. An ordinary ethnic plebiscite might not satisfy the Czechs, because of the economic importance of the area. We need a solution which will give the Czechs the coal they need without evicting Poles or placing them under foreign rule. This cannot be done by drawing a firmer frontier line, but by diminishing its importance. A Polish-Czech customs union, short of full federation, would be a statesmanlike move.

V

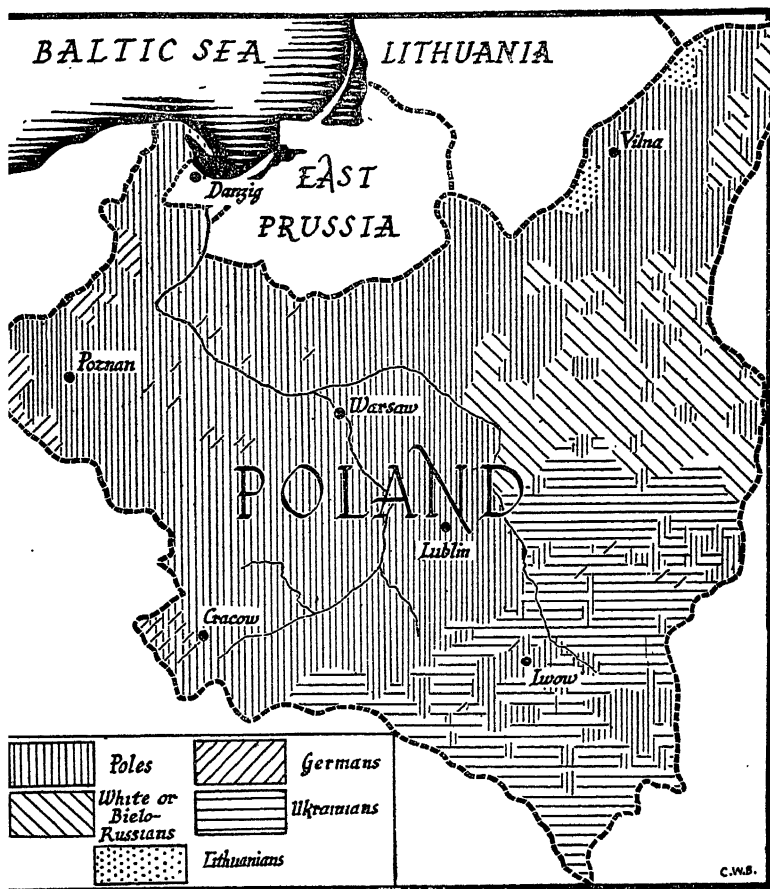
Such, briefly, were the problems of the Polish western boundary. Because of the defeat of Germany, they may now appear as comparatively insignificant. In the East, however, the frontier problem has provided headline news, and only a reckless man would say that we had heard the last of it.

We have noted that while the Polish frontiers with Germany could be fixed by the Allies, those with Russia were left in abeyance, since at the time there was no final authority apparent in Russia, still in the throes of its revolutionary wars. The question was one of immense difficulty. A few purists among the Poles urged that the just frontier would be the one which Russia seized by force in 1772. They thought in terms of a historic Poland which, indeed, had never been a simple national state, but almost a minor empire, including many minorities within its rule. Romantic Poles recalled ancient dreams, not only of historical rights, but of their country's cultural mission. It should be emphasised that such views were by no means the monopoly of men of the Right.

Most Poles recognised that aspirations to the old frontiers of 1772 were absurd, however, for the eastern regions were overwhelmingly Russian in population—the 1772 frontier extended as far east as Kiev. Generally, the peoples were so mixed that

argument was inevitable, for any one of a dozen frontiers could have been equally fair.

In the north, Bielo-Russians (or White Russians) had been settled in Polish territory about Vilno. They were a peasant people, of simple character and habits, not strongly political,



Races in Poland

farming comparatively poor ground, and having little or no national consciousness. To the south was a medley of races, in the area known as the Pripet Marshes. For centuries isolated from centres of power, on the shallow islands of the marshes had

gathered men of ancient and modern Eastern European stocks. Their life was incredibly simple, isolated from most forms of what is commonly called civilisation. They had little political or national consciousness. More than once, when I asked a man whether he were Pole or Russian, he would answer: "I am from here." The hamlet where he lived represented the limit of his loyalties. Most ethnic students are agreed, however, that the majority population in this region was of Russian stock.

Further south still, however, was an area more important than both others combined. This was Eastern Galicia, or Polish Ukraine. It had been seized by Austria from Poland in 1772, and housed a very mixed population of Poles and Ukrainians. The country was fertile, and there were considerable natural resources, including a small oilfield.

There are about 40 million Ukrainians in the world—a highly cultured and intelligent race. Thirty-three million of them lived in Soviet Russia, where their Republic is of overwhelming importance: without its rich black earth and coalfields the economy of Russia would be severely strained. There were about 4 million Ukrainians in Poland, nearly 1 million in Roumania, half a million in the eastern province of Czechoslovakia, not to speak of millions abroad. (The largest group, half a million, is in Canada: after British and French, they form the largest racial section of the Dominion.)

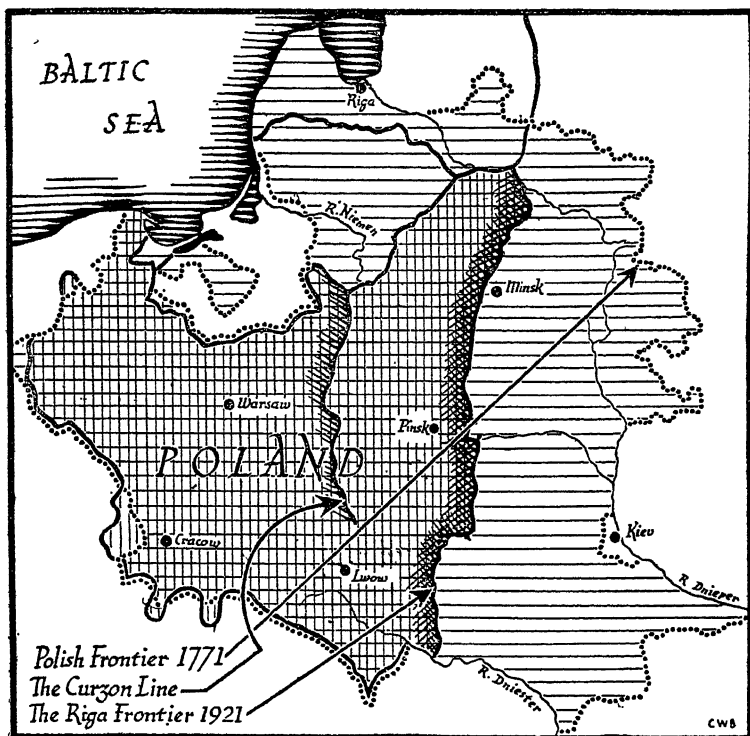
The Ukrainians are a Slav tribe, near to, yet quite distinct from, both Russians and Poles. In olden days they were ruled by Polish or Lithuanian princes, and were treated as serfs. Many of them moved to the east, where they were known as Cossacks, and founded their remarkable communities in the Dnieper Valley. Gradually they began to fall under the rule of the Russian Tsars: this process was completed by 1793.

It is important to note that there never was an independent Ukraine; yet a national consciousness was never completely subdued, though for centuries its basis was cultural rather than political. Indeed, prior to 1914, any hope of Ukrainian independence was indeed scanty. The bulk of the Ukrainians were subjects of the Tsar, never very sympathetic to ideas of freedom: the remainder were included within the Austrian Empire.

In the confusion of the Russian collapse in 1917, however, the Germans set up a puppet Ukrainian state. Its standing was obscure, but it did serve to revive old dreams of independence. Thus, when Germany was defeated a year later, Petliura, the Ukrainian leader, proclaimed the freedom of his country.

Disaster was to follow. Pilsudski proposed a federation, with Poland and Ukraine as equal partners. Petliura declined: instead, taking his war-cry from the fact that there were millions

of Ukrainians to be rescued from the Polish yoke, he invaded Eastern Galicia. He was easily defeated—and, while Poles and Ukrainians were so engaged, the Bolsheviks marched in from the north and captured Kiev. Petliura now made a rightabout turn and allied himself with the Poles. A year earlier this would have been a sound move: now it was too late. True, at first the Polish-Ukrainian alliance was successful: Kiev was recaptured. Then the Bolsheviks recovered, swept into Poland, and we have seen them halted by Pilsudski literally at the gates of Warsaw.



The Eastern Frontier of Poland at the Time of the Partition in 1772, as suggested by the "Curzon Line," and as settled by the Treaty of Riga, 1921

In the subsequent peace, at Riga in 1921, a compromise frontier was arranged. It kept more than 5 million Ukrainians and Bielo-Russians inside Poland, and 1 million Poles inside Russia. For the moment the independence of Ukraine proper was recognised, but this was more in form than in substance, and in

1923 Ukraine became a founder-member of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics.

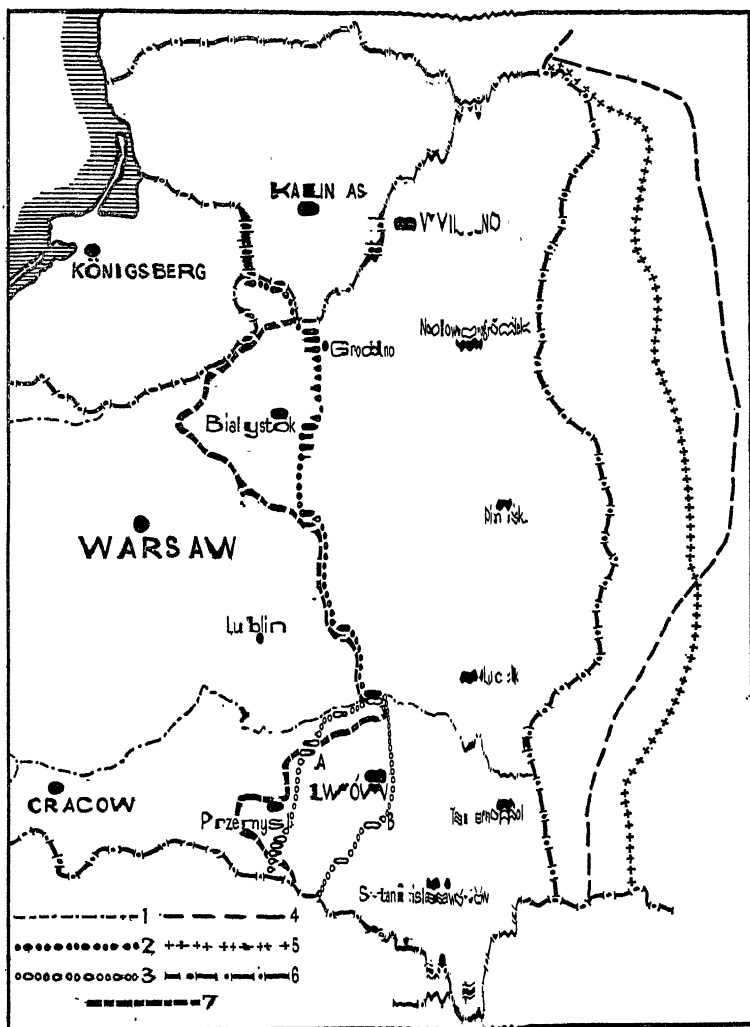
Now, in the course of these struggles had occurred an event which passed almost unnoticed at the time, but which was revived with emphasis twenty years later, and is likely to be the subject of vigorous argument for many years to come.

The diplomats who gathered at Paris in 1919 recognised that, even if the Polish-Russian frontier could not be finally determined, something drastic had to be done. The Russians had already invaded Poland in the wake of the retreating Germans, and now the Polish-Ukrainian-Russian tangle threatened to plunge Eastern Europe into another frightful war. On December 8th, 1919, an Allied Commission drew up a line of demarcation. It had first been suggested, the previous April, by a group of Tsarist emigrés in Paris—Prince Lvov, Serge Sozonov and Makh-lakoff—and was now transmitted to both Poles and Russians by Clemenceau. It was never intended as a frontier: Poland was to establish a civil administration to the west, but her right to claim territory to the east of the line was expressly reserved. The objective was to prevent war: Poland and Russia were both invited to halt their armies short of the line, so that there should be no possibility of a clash.

Both Poland and Russia refused to give any heed to the suggestion. It was repeated on July 11th, 1920, when Lord Curzon made another attempt to ease the situation: from this time the suggested line of demarcation bore his name. Again his appeal was ignored. The Poles claimed a frontier considerably further to the east, and Russia was not interested in frontiers at all—these were the days of ideas of world revolution: in particular, the Russians were very anxious to establish direct contact with Germany, and we have noted the proclamation that this could only be done over the body of Poland.

Thus all efforts at mediation failed, and the "Curzon Line" fell into oblivion for twenty years: you will find no mention of it even in Soviet records. The war was fought out, and Russia lost. The frontier with Poland was established by the Treaty of Riga in 1921. It was a compromise, about halfway between the "Curzon Line" and the frontier of 1772. Joffe, the leader of the Russian delegation at Riga, explained that the frontier was no more than a temporary expedient, since the whole world would shortly fall within the Communist fold! Declarations like this aroused only mild interest in countries like Britain and U.S.A., but naturally formed the basis of legitimate suspicion in Poland.

(Lord d'Abernon has described the Battle of Warsaw as the eighteenth decisive battle of the world. In these days we are apt to forget the years of Bolshevik missionary enthusiasm. The



The "Curzon Line" and others

1. Frontiers before 1914. 2. Demarcation line of December 8th, 1919; subsequently adopted by the Supreme Council on July 10th, 1920, as a basis for a Russian-Polish armistice, i.e. the "Curzon Line." 3. Two lines of demarcation considered at the Peace Conference as between Poland and Eastern Galicia. Line A was suggested as the basis of the whole of Eastern Galicia being ceded to Poland; Line B showed how independent Ukraine be established. 4. Frontier suggested by the Polish leader Dmowski, March 3rd, 1919. 5. Frontier suggested by Lenin on January 29th, 1920. 6. The "Riga" frontier. 7. The Ribbentrop-Molotov line of September 28th, 1939.

Russians were all ready to take over not only Poland, but Germany as well: they came complete with lists of potential opponents to be eliminated. Their conduct during their occupation of eastern Poland is still vividly remembered. Such things were not forgotten by Russia's neighbours even when her own policy had considerably changed. Fear and apprehension are the greatest of distorters.)

The "Curzon Line" was scarcely mentioned in the negotiations at Riga. Indeed, Lenin had earlier dismissed it as "unfair to the Poles," and had offered a frontier 200 miles further east. Indeed, this differed only in detail from that demanded by the Polish leader, Dmowski, and but for the suspicion of the moment a compromise could easily have been arranged and war avoided. For the failure, the Powers at Paris bear a share of responsibility: they were too aloof and distant, and completely failed to apply energetic pressure. It is important to note that the frontier which Lenin offered was actually to the east of the subsequent Riga boundary.

Thus the Russians not merely accepted the Riga frontier, but claimed it as a Russian victory. The *Great Soviet Encyclopædia*, an official publication, said in its 1940 edition: "On March 13th, 1921, the Treaty of Peace was signed. In accordance with its provisions, Poland kept Galicia and a part of Bielo-Russia. However, the new Soviet-Polish frontier was far less advantageous to the Poles than the one which was proposed to Poland by the Soviet Government in April, 1920: the frontier determined after the Polish-Soviet War was 50 to 100 kilometres to the west of the line which was suggested at the beginning of the war. This means that Soviet Russia emerged victorious even from the struggle against the forces of counter-revolution."

Moderate Polish opinion was also satisfied with the compromise. It was claimed that the Poles, aware of their very weak strategic position, were genuinely anxious for real agreement at Riga, and thus were prepared to be generous to Russia! On paper, therefore, both sides were satisfied with the result.

Actually, however, many suspicions still rankled. The Russians looked upon Poland as "the spearhead of the capitalistic Powers," apparently bent on the destruction of the Communist state. Even in 1919, Russia had insisted on "guarantees that Poland will cease to be an instrument of aggression and intrigue"—words which have a familiar modern ring. On the other hand, Polish suspicions were fanned by heated and emotional Russian proclamations, which called upon the Polish workers and peasants to turn away from their leaders and join the new community of brothers. (The proclamation issued when Russia invaded Poland in September, 1939, was along exactly the same lines.) Further,

as the Russian armies advanced into Poland, they brought with them a ready-made "Polish Provisional Revolutionary Government," of Polish Communists, headed by Feliks Dzierzynski, who later became a famous chief of the Russian secret police.

Obviously, such suspicions were not immediately banished by the signing of the treaty at Riga. This, however, did bring to both Poland and Russia what they needed above all things, a period of peace. The argument about frontiers was discarded, and the two neighbours prepared for correct if not cordial relations.

Because of the mixed population of the eastern provinces, attained as a result of war, Poland gained a reputation for "imperialism." The critics ignored the blame due to the Allies: if they had perceived the course of events in Russia and had recognised the Bolshevik Government earlier, there would have been no Polish-Russian War. Further, few people who do not know the region intimately can appreciate the deep animosity between the two races, which did not diminish with the changing of a régime, and is still a dominant factor to-day.

("The Curzon Line," by the way, did *not* cover Eastern Galicia, which had been Polish until 1772, under Austrian rule from then until 1918, and had never been Russian in all its history. This area had been dealt with at the Peace Conference by two proposals, depending on whether Eastern Galicia should (a) be allocated to Poland, or (b) join with Ukraine in an independent state. These variations are indicated by lines A and B in the map on p. 85.)

It should be added that the British Government always considered that the Riga frontier was too far to the east and withheld its recognition for nearly two years, urging an ethnic frontier nearer to the "Curzon Line." Nobody at that time suggested the "Curzon Line" as the actual frontier: this idea was not encountered until 1943.

The uneasiness on ethnic grounds was justifiable. The eastern areas of Poland—between the "Curzon Line" and the Riga frontier—were of very mixed population.

Poles	3,914,000	(36·4 per cent.)
Ukrainians	4,365,000	(40·6 per cent.)
Bielo-Russians	1,284,000	(11·8 per cent.)
Russians	102,000	(0·9 per cent.)
Lithuanians	76,000	(0·7 per cent.)
Jews	899,000	(8·4 per cent.)
Others	128,000	(1·2 per cent.)

The races were hopelessly intermingled: the map on p. 81 gives a rough impression. In some districts the towns were overwhelmingly Polish, while the surrounding countryside was largely

Ukrainian. Generally, it will be noted, there were Polish majorities in considerable areas of the north and south of the disputed territory, while in the centre the Russian races easily predominated.

It is necessary to distinguish between the two provinces which made up Polish Ukraine. That to the East, Volhynia, had been seized by Russia from Poland in 1772, and since then had been in the closest contact with the rest of Ukraine. Its people belonged to the Orthodox Church, and recognised the Patriarch at Moscow. Eastern Galicia, on the other hand, had never been part of Russia—it was under Austrian rule from 1772 to 1918—and its cultural influences were very different. Its capital, Lwow, was the home of a famous Polish university, and its Western administration differed very considerably from the autocratic methods of the Tsar's officials. The differing outlook between Galician and Volhynian Ukrainians was emphasised by that of religion. The Galicians were Uniats; they had resisted efforts to convert them to Catholicism, but had accepted a compromise; they followed the order of the Orthodox service, but accepted the authority of the Pope at Rome. Nevertheless, although distinct from their brothers in Volhynia, they were even more distinct from the Poles, who were now installed as their rulers.

These distinctions, however, can be over-exaggerated. Long association had resulted in intermarriage, while Polonisation was common during the earlier period of Polish rule. This led to strange effects. I remember meeting the Metropolitan of the Uniat Church at Lwow: he classed himself as Ukrainian, but his brother was a general in the Polish Army!

Minorities are almost always a source of weakness to a state. Repression nearly always fails, and generosity all too often brings a scurvy reward. The fact is that few people in the Western democracies recognised the intense force of nationalism in Eastern Europe, especially in those lands which had just recovered their freedom after long periods of subjection.

Among the Ukrainians these ideas were fervently held because they had been so firmly suppressed. Now 4 million Ukrainians were Polish subjects, and did not pretend to be happy. Nor was their treatment especially kind: an extreme nationalist like Pilsudski was not of the type to appreciate the aspirations of others if they clashed with his own. The Ukrainians were "protected" by the usual Minority Clauses, guaranteeing favourable treatment, especially in education and culture, but these clauses can only be implemented when majority and minority are agreed and are in the mood for reason and compromise. These conditions did not prevail in Galicia, and there followed a great deal of discontent and distress. In September, 1922, the Polish Parliament

passed a law granting autonomy to the Ukrainians, but Pilsudski believed that it would weaken the Polish state, and ensured that it was never implemented.

The more the Ukrainians declined to accept the situation, the firmer was the Polish reaction. I saw a number of the unhappy incidents of those days: Ukrainian villagers, to call attention to their grievances, would burn down a post office or murder a policeman. The Polish reaction was generally drastic. The country was in any case short of experienced officials, and most of those sent to the troubled areas were of the disciplinarian type, who knew only one method of securing order. As usual, one form of terrorism encouraged another. Nevertheless, it is worth recording that Ukrainians were allowed to publish nationalist newspapers and otherwise organise their cause in Poland—a liberty never allowed to their brothers in Russia.

The terrorist incidents, disturbing though they were, received a world publicity far beyond their deserts: they were not nearly so destructive of life and property as, for example, the Irish “troubles” of the same period. The explanation was simple: many of the Ukrainian difficulties were impelled and financed from without.

It was always a major part of German policy to make bad blood between Poland and Russia, and it was amazing how many unconscious assistants were enlisted in the Western democracies! If Poland could be thoroughly embroiled with Russia, then it would be easy for Germany to take advantage of the situation to recover the “Corridor”—and Silesia. This policy was vigorously pursued long before Hitler was ever heard of.

The Germans financed a Ukrainian Bureau, which for a considerable time had its headquarters in Berlin. Its proclaimed objectives included an independent Ukraine. Thus it was as unpopular in Russia as in Poland, for an independent Ukraine would wreck the Soviet economic system. Since Russian political discipline was much firmer than Polish, the Bureau had little hope of operating in Ukraine proper, but in Galicia it instigated continuous trouble.

Its activities ceased abruptly in 1934. In that year, it will be recalled, Poland and Germany signed a non-aggression pact, and one of the implied agreements was that German-inspired organisations should no longer foment trouble in Poland.

With poor statesmanship, Poland chose this moment to denounce the minority clauses of the peace treaties. The actual reason was that Russia had just joined the League of Nations, and Poland was suspicious that her neighbour would use these clauses to interfere in Poland's domestic affairs. Actually, the Polish treatment of her minorities was more liberal than it had

been previously: by this time the best brains of the Polish Civil Service had been seconded to the troubled areas, and far better conditions had resulted. Yet Poland's case was as usual poorly presented, and incurred severe criticism in all the democratic countries. By 1935 the Ukrainians had eighteen members of the Sejm, or Polish Parliament, were well represented on local councils, and were being admitted as civil servants and the like: improved conditions were prevailing in Ukrainian schools. Yet nationalism is often encouraged rather than repressed by concessions, and nationalist aspirations among the Ukrainians persisted.

In Volhynia the problem was partly racial, partly the age-old quarrel between landowner and peasant. Many of the big estates had been split up, but the population was such that there simply was not enough land to go round, and landless Polish peasants were just as miserable as their Ukrainian counterparts. Generally, however, the outlook in Volhynia remained nearer to Russia than that in Galicia. Here the Ukrainians watched in dismay the course of events in their fatherland: the liquidation of the *kulaks*, the famines, the political persecution of opponents of the régime, and the antipathy towards religion. Thus their efforts continued to be directed towards Ukrainian independence rather than to the union of Galicia with Soviet Russia.

This, then, was the situation when the Germans attacked Poland in September, 1939. The eastern half of Poland housed a mixed population—Polish, Ukrainian and Bielo-Russian. Of the two latter races, a proportion might have preferred to be incorporated within Russia: what proportion nobody will ever know, for the people never had a real chance to express their own wishes. A considerable body of Ukrainians, however, was more anxious to join with their brothers in forming an independent Ukraine, a project highly undesirable to Russian plans, and very unlikely to be realised. Poland, after making many mistakes in the treatment of her minorities, was now handling them fairly, but they were still minorities. We shall have cause to return to this problem later, for it was to have a serious effect upon the course of the war, and an even greater influence upon the issues of the peace.

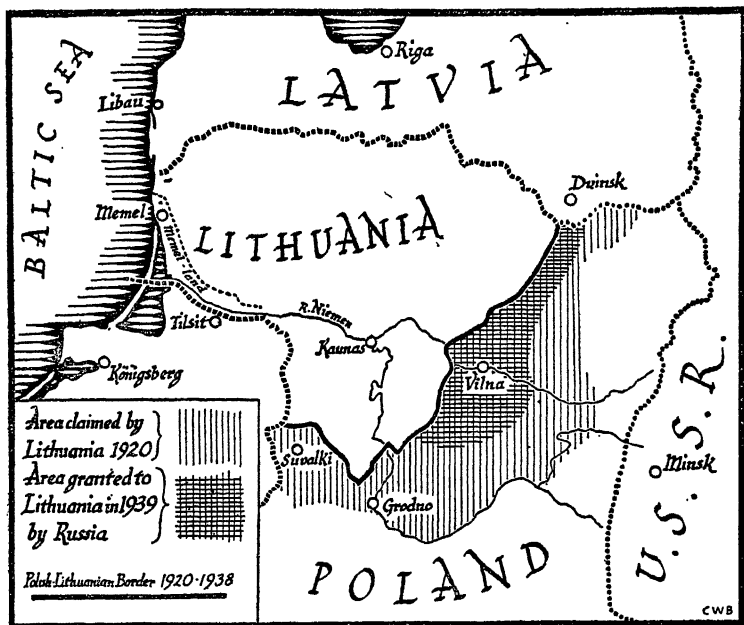
VI

One further halt, and our rapid tour of Poland's frontier problems is complete. Our final case is that of Vilno—or Vilna, or Wilno, or Vilnius; all names apply to the same place.

We have seen that in 1386 Lithuania was united to Poland by a royal marriage. At that time Lithuania was a great empire, with Vilno as its capital. Its people were pagans, and Polish

missionaries came to Christianise them. Culture and learning accompanied the priests: Polish officials were also imported, and the character of the city changed. It was not merely that the proportion of Poles constantly increased, but that the process of voluntary or involuntary Polonisation was rapid. If a Lithuanian youth wanted education, he had to learn Polish to get it. By 1772 Vilno was Polish in all its characteristics, though the surrounding countryside still housed considerable numbers of Lithuanians.

During the years of Tsarist rule, Russian elements were in-



Lithuania and Vilno, 1939-41

roduced—officials, soldiers and colonists. Thus to-day the region is an ethnic tangle, with intermarriage adding to the racial confusion.

When, after the Russian Revolution and the German defeat, the Lithuanians recovered their independence, they naturally claimed their ancient capital of Vilno. Its fate was as chequered as its ethnic composition. First the Bolsheviks seized it from the Lithuanians: then it was captured by the Poles—and lost again. Subsequently, as the Russians after their defeat in 1920 retreated in disorder, they handed Vilno back to the Lithuanians.

This appeared to be final: especially when, on October 7th, 1920, a military agreement was signed at Suwalki between Poland and Lithuania. But two days later the Poles had seized Vilno. It was given out at the time that the raid was effected by a "rebel" general, Zeligowski, whose men hailed from the Vilno region. Actually, the expedition was officially backed, and Pilsudski declined to move from the city. His high-handed action cost Poland a good deal of sympathy. He calculated that war-weary statesmen would capitulate to a *fait accompli*, and he was right. To their protests about the use of force he had a clear answer: they had allowed D'Annunzio to seize Fiume by force and had done nothing about it.

There can be no two opinions about the method in which Vilno was occupied. The basis of the Polish claim was quite a different thing. Vilno in 1920 was a Polish city—only 2 per cent. of its inhabitants were Lithuanian. Eventually, as usual, the Poles gave in, and the Lithuanians legalised the Zeligowski method by their own seizure of Memel. Statesmen often make high-sounding speeches condemning the policy of grabbing by force, but the grabbers are not affected by mere words.

The Lithuanians refused to accept the situation at Vilno. Their pride was bitterly hurt at the loss of their old capital, and in the surrounding district were thousands of Lithuanians, now under Polish rule. For nearly twenty years Poland and Lithuania glared at one another across a closed frontier. When I crossed it in 1934, I needed months of diplomatic preparations, and discovered that I was only the fourteenth person to pass in twelve years. Yet if there were two countries in Europe who could most profitably have resumed their ancient collaboration, those two were Poland and Lithuania.

Admittedly the problem was difficult. Of course the Lithuanians wanted their capital; of course the Poles wanted a Polish city. No compromise could possibly satisfy both parties. The only solution would have been a resumption of a Polish-Lithuanian federal union, but this idea had been killed by the seizure of Vilno and the suspicions which flowed from this action.

Until 1938 there were no diplomatic relations between the two countries. Both peoples suffered, especially those in the frontier areas. Then Poland took stern action: by this time the shape of things to come was getting to be apparent, and Poland could no longer afford to have a hostile neighbour on her flank, even though that neighbour might be weak. An ultimatum was issued and perforce accepted: diplomatic relations were resumed—and, strangely enough, became even friendly. For by this time the Nazi threat to the peace of Europe was only too apparent. Austria had been seized and Czechoslovakia was threatened. Hitler's next move might

be towards either Danzig or Memel, or both: it was only common sense that Poland and Lithuania should stand close together. Lithuania's only other potential ally against Germany would have been Russia, and her memories of Tsarist days made her desperately anxious to keep Russian as well as German armies off her soil.

Vilno, however, remained intensely loyal to Poland, and there was no question of its return to Lithuania. When Hitler seized Memel, as had been anticipated, the two neighbours drew even closer together: given a few years of peace, a federation might have resulted. In place of the years were given a few uneasy weeks: then the German onslaught on Poland began.

In the case of previous problems, I have postponed comment at this point, to take it up again after considering the course of the war. In the case of Vilno, however, our record of events could be conveniently continued.

Again Vilno experienced rapid changes of ownership. When the Russians marched into eastern Poland on September 17th, 1939, they handed over Vilno and a small portion of its hinterland to Lithuania. Its population was very mixed:

Poles	.	.	.	.	337,000	(69 per cent.)
Jews	.	.	.	.	66,000	(13.5 per cent.)
Lithuanians	.	.	.	.	55,000	(11.3 per cent.)
Russians	.	.	.	.	16,000	(3.2 per cent.)
Bielo-Russians	.	.	.	.	12,000	(2.4 per cent.)
Others	.	.	.	.	3,000	(0.6 per cent.)

The Lithuanians were delighted at the recovery of their ancient capital, but, before the rejoicings were complete, Russia had occupied the whole of Lithuania! They were driven out by the Germans, and Lithuania became part of a German province, but the Russians recaptured it in 1944. They claimed, however, that it was a Soviet Socialist Republic, now an integral part of the Soviet Union.¹

Thus Vilno, a city housing a considerable majority of Poles, became the capital of the Lithuanian Republic in U.S.S.R! We shall meet some of its Poles later, however.

VII

Except for Czechoslovakia, Poland had a higher proportion of minorities than any country of Europe. As ever, they proved a source of weakness, aggravated in some cases by the inept policy of the Poles towards them. They gave Poland's neighbours ample opportunity to intrigue in Polish affairs, and an obvious policy

¹ For an account of the methods adopted to secure its incorporation, see my *Baltic Background*.

was to placate and to win the loyalty of some of the minority groups. This was not done: although the minorities themselves contributed liberally to the atmosphere of suspicion, the major share of the blame must always be borne by the ruling Power.

The Germans were early recognised as potential "Fifth Columnists," and were not trusted. Further, Polish opinion was incensed by German treatment of Poles inside the Reich. It is probable that no leniency would have produced a better atmosphere. The Germans always regarded concessions as a sign of weakness.

The position among the Ukrainians was different. As we have seen, they differed from the Germans in that they were anxious for independence, but not necessarily for incorporation within the parent body as it then existed. Further, the rural standard of life was so low that many Ukrainians were not politically conscious, but only interested in the immediate struggle for existence. Had the early promise of autonomy been implemented, Pilsudski's old idea of federation with Ukraine might have been achieved. As it was, the moment was lost: then it was too late. It is easy as well as beneficial to grant home rule the day before it is demanded, but it is difficult and seldom appreciated the day after.

In quite a different category from the Germans and Ukrainians was another minority race in Poland—the Jews.

In 1939 there were three and a quarter million Jews in Poland—10 per cent. of the entire population. Proportionately, the Jewish figure in Poland was the highest in the world: there were 4,400,000 Jews in U.S.A., but they were distributed among a population of 140 million.

In the west of Poland the proportion was small—about 1 per cent. In cities like Warsaw and Cracow it numbered 30 per cent. of the population, and in some of the towns of the east as much as 90 per cent.

I have described how the Polish nobles were forbidden by the restrictions of caste to engage in commerce, while the peasants were tied to the soil. Thus, centuries ago, Polish kings invited Germans and German Jews to settle in Poland as traders. They did so very successfully. In the course of time, most of the Germans were Polonised, but the Jews had no intention of being assimilated and remained Jews.

Nevertheless, their numbers were so comparatively small that they would never have become a "problem." In Tsarist days, however, Jews were forbidden to reside in Russia proper, but were banished to the fringe of outlying provinces—of which the largest was Russian Poland. Thus a considerable part of the Jews of Poland were Russian Jews who had emigrated during the last

half-century. In many of their characteristics the eastern Jews differ considerably from their brethren of the West. They hold even more fiercely to their ancient practices. The most familiar sight in a Polish town was the bearded Jew with his black caftan, or the youth with his ceremonial curls or incipient virgin beard.

The older immigrants had become the traders of Poland, and were prosperous. The new influx was never happy. The psychological basis of their disturbing influence was readily comprehensible. The only government they had ever known was an oppressor, so that they felt a natural tendency to be suspicious of any government.

Besides controlling the commerce of the Polish towns, Jews were usually the village storekeepers. In financial acumen they were always more alert than the peasants, who complained bitterly that the Jews always got the better of a bargain. When the peasant needed money, the village Jew was the only man who could lend it. A moneylender is seldom regarded as a benefactor. Anti-Semitism does not depend alone upon government regulations, but grows out of human resentments, often absurdly and illogically based, but sometimes not without a reasonable basis.

The insistence of the Jews on their nationality led to difficulties: in 1919 they demanded a Jewish parliament within the Polish state, an obviously impossible situation. In recent censuses they usually described themselves under the "Nationality" heading as "Jewish." Nevertheless, during the inter-war years the Polish Government granted citizenship to 600,000 Jews who had not hitherto possessed it.

The situation was gravely complicated in the reborn Poland. The greater part of the commercial life of the country was in Jewish hands. By now old snobbish views about trade had disappeared; descendants of nobles and peasants alike were anxious to go into business. Jews were thus hard hit by enterprising Polish firms, sometimes with Government backing: they received severe blows from the new co-operative societies, which became a power all over Poland. While there were still large numbers of Jews prominent in the professions, thousands of commercial Jews had been driven out of business to join the "poor Jews," sons of the immigrants from Tsarist Russia. In turn they were attacked by the growing Polish trade unions, who accused them of undercutting normal wages and conditions.

There were comparatively few farmers among the Jews: including their families, only 125,000 were engaged in agriculture; 1,313,000 were in industry—the textile industry was largely under Jewish control—while 1,279,000 were occupied in commerce. About 395,000 were engaged in the professions—in some branches they numbered 57 per cent. of the total members.

Anti-Semitism in Poland scarcely dates back for 100 years. In the middle of the last century Poles began to look to their own economy, and found the Jews in the way, with almost monopolistic control. By the end of the First World War feeling was more bitter, for it was held that the Jews had collaborated with the Germans during the long occupation of Poland. In a series of riots in the big cities about 280 Jews were killed.

Under Pilsudski, however, things were easier: he numbered many Jews among his supporters. After his death anti-Semitic feeling increased to something like its old standards. It took the form of an economic boycott. Just as people in the Western democracies urge "Buy British!" or "America first!" so in Poland have been seen the slogans, "Buy Polish," or "Poland for the Poles." The double aim was to help Poles now established in business and to "encourage" the Jews to emigrate. Professional associations and trade unions alike urged Christians to deal with Christians. "A Pole supports a Pole."

University students had always been anti-Semitic, and after Pilsudski's death enforced an unofficial *numerus clausus*, limiting the number of Jewish students to their proportion of the population. Then, in 1938, the existing and liberal law was altered to permit the introduction of "Ghetto benches"—special seats in the classrooms on which Jewish students must sit. To their credit, most Polish professors refused to accept such conditions, and some resigned in defence of their principles.

Most Poles made a sharp distinction between the assimilated Jew, scarcely distinguishable from the Pole, and the bearded, caftaned, Yiddish-speaking Jew who not merely resisted assimilation, but proclaimed his nationality. Yet public opinion was disturbed by the anti-liberal ideas inherent in the campaign against the Jews, and all persuasion to apply the Nuremberg legislation was resisted.

Yet the campaign was affected by Nazi ideas which crossed the frontier—one might say that they were forced across the frontier, for they were part of a deliberate Nazi plan. There were young Poles who considered it heroic to beat up Jews. Yet all the blame for anti-Semitism cannot be placed on Hitler. It was more noticeable in Poland simply because there were so many Jews. Many of the "incidents" were the resentful if unfair revolt of simple peasants against the men who held their mortgages.

At one time I was very nervous about the Jewish problem in Poland. Zionist doctrines had encouraged Jewish aspirations, and there was a real clash with Polish ideas. Nevertheless, in the immediate pre-war years there were signs of an easier atmosphere: the younger generation, not so steeped in historical prejudice, was more ready to accept compromise. For the first

time in centuries there was considerable intermarriage between Jews and Christians. The better-class Jewish families left the old Ghettos and lived in Christian suburbs. Another generation or so might have solved the problem. Poles and Jews alike were seeking an outlet for surplus numbers. I was besieged by enquiries about Palestine. Colonies in South America or Africa were also discussed.

Then came the German attack on Poland. Jews rallied to the side of the Poles against the common menace. The exiled Polish Government in London issued a decree guaranteeing to all Jews full rights of citizenship. There was a reasonable prospect of a new era in Polish-Jewish relations. But neither Poles nor Jews could foresee the terrible solution to their problems which was to be applied.

VIII

While a tourist asks for a guide-book, the first demand of an expert investigator is for a country's statistical year book.

Statistics are not only vital, but absorbing. They are too often skipped, but no picture of a country is complete without them. Here is a rapid outline of the state of Poland as it was at the outbreak of war.

Its area was 150,041 square miles—about half that of the kingdom which was submerged in 1772. For comparison, the area of England is 50,000 square miles.

The figures of population are most important. The total was 34,500,000, but was increasing rapidly. The birth-rate was 24.6 per 1,000—every tenth woman from fifteen to forty becomes a mother each year. The death rate is 13.9, giving a natural increase of 10.7 per 1,000. This is the highest among the major countries—England's figure is 2.7, and that of France 0.3—likely soon to become a minus.

But for the war, Poland's population would have reached well over 40 million, and would have drawn level with that of England, passing that of France.

Far more significant are the age groups. The Poles marry early, and their families are young. In 1939 nearly one-half of the Poles were under twenty-five; 62 per cent. were under thirty.

The mixture of racial origins has been noted in our examination of Polish problems. Of the total population, 58.9 per cent. were Poles, 10.1 per cent Ukrainians, 8.6 per cent. Jews, 3.8 per cent. Ruthenian, 3.1 per cent. Bielo-Russian, 2.3 per cent German, 0.4 per cent. Russian, with oddments of Czechs and Lithuanians. In religion, 64.8 per cent. were Roman Catholics, 10.4 per cent. Uniat, 11.8 per cent. Orthodox, 2.6 per cent. Protestant, 0.5 per cent. other Christian sects, and 9.8 per cent. Jewish.

Warsaw, the capital, was the eighth largest city in Europe, with a population of 1,289,000. Only 27 per cent. of the Polish population lived in towns, emphasising the rural character of the country. Only eleven towns in the whole country exceeded 100,000 in population. Lodz, second to Warsaw, had 665,000. Only 19·4 per cent. of the people were engaged in industry, 6·1 per cent. in commerce, 3·6 per cent. in communications, and 60·6 per cent. in agriculture.

There were no less than 8,500,000 Poles abroad, mostly as a result of emigration impelled by Tsarist repression or economic necessity. Four million settled in U.S.A.—Chicago has no less than 500,000 Poles, and Detroit 200,000: the American Poles publish more than a hundred newspapers in Polish.

The Riga frontiers left 1 million Poles in Russia, and there were also 1,450,000 in Germany: about 840,000 in Silesia or other districts continuous to the frontier, the rest in districts like the Ruhr, where Poles were in great demand as miners. (There were 741,000 Germans in Poland.) France, also, welcomed Poles to her mining areas—600,000 in all. Some villages in the minefields about Lens and Metz were almost entirely Polish.

Canada had accepted 150,000 Poles, Brazil 300,000. Others, to a total of 400,000, found themselves on the wrong side of the frontier in Czechoslovakia, Lithuania and Roumania.

The agricultural statistics of Poland were also of interest. Of the total area of 93,605,000 acres, 45,836,000 were arable land, its quality varying from the rich black earth of Galicia to the thin sandy soil of the north. Meadows totalled 1,396,000 acres, pasture lands 6,610,000 acres, orchards and gardens 1,363,000 acres. Forests covered 22 per cent. of the country, 20,555,000 acres, while 9,854,000 acres were barren land.

The principal crops were wheat, rye, barley, oats, potatoes, beet, flax and hemp. The thin soil was not suitable for a fastidious crop like wheat, which involved great labour and considerable expense in its cultivation.

Seventy per cent. of the forests were coniferous, the rest deciduous. The State owned 40 per cent. of the forests, mostly of alder, birch, beech and pine. 1,693,000 tons of timber and timber products were exported each year, of which 45 per cent. came to Britain, mostly in the form of paper, pulp and railway sleepers.

The livestock population consisted of 3,916,000 horses, 10,554,000 cattle, and 7,525,000 pigs.

Polish industry was noted for its small undertakings, of the craftsman with a couple of workmen type. Of 220,000 establishments, only 9,000 employed more than fifteen men!

Metal industries had 190,000 operatives, textiles 170,000. Lodz

was the great textile centre. Originally built to supply Russia, it lost its natural market when Poland became free again, but found new exporting grounds in Britain, India and China, in addition to a great increase in the home demand as Polish standards of life were raised.

Glass, pottery and brick industries needed 84,000 hands. Chemical industries—fertilisers, dyes, soap, plastics, rubber—employed 54,000. There were also important manufactures of paper, timber products, sugar, leather and preserved foodstuffs. The oil industry, south of Lwow, was the oldest in the world—it started operations in 1853. Its yield was only 500,000 tons a year, but was increasing, and its importance to Poland was obvious. It also distributed over a wide area a plentiful supply of natural gas.

I have already referred to the coal, zinc, lead, iron and salt mines of Silesia. The coal mines employed 75,000 men. Many of the pits were modernised in their equipment, plentiful in their reserves—I have seen 15-foot seams being worked!—and the Poles were always famous miners. The output per manshift was 1,571 kilograms—the British average is less than 1,000. The total output of coal was 30 million tons, against the British figure of 230 million.

Polish exports to Britain were of a value of 215 million zloty; her imports from Britain, 148 million zloty.

Since Poland was often dubbed a "reactionary" country, it is interesting to note that State control extended far beyond the limits common in the Western democracies. State banks were predominant, and the State held the monopolies of salt, tobacco, matches—and lotteries. Railways and telegraphs were national systems, and the State lands were very extensive—172,600 hectares of arable land, 3,338,600 hectares of forest. There were also nationally owned refineries, metal plants and other industries.

The co-operative idea was making rapid strides in the new Poland, and by 1939 there were 13,741 societies, with more than 3 million members.

Education had been varied under the occupying Powers. In the German portion education was methodical and adequate—in German! Polish children were not even allowed to pray in their native language. In the Austrian sector more liberal standards prevailed, and the Poles controlled their own schools. The aim of the Russians was expressed in the notorious phrase of Kathov: "We must bring Poland down to the Russian level of ignorance."

Thus Poland had almost to begin again. Before 1914, only 54 per cent. of Polish children attended school: by 1938 this had been raised to 90 per cent. Conditions in urban districts were better than those in the country. In Upper Silesia 99·3 per cent.

of the children attended schools. In the Pripet Marshes I have encountered isolated families twenty miles from the nearest village.

The village school has always been a problem in itself. In countries with good communications it has been solved by bringing in the older children to central schools. In many districts of Poland this is not yet practicable, and I would find a village school with two teachers attempting to cope with sixty children of all ages.

There were enormous difficulties to be encountered, owing to the lack of schools and teachers, but enthusiasm was intense. By 1939 there were 1,876 nursery schools with 98,000 pupils of ages from three to seven; 27,955 primary schools with 4,686,000 pupils from eight to fourteen; 770 secondary schools with 166,000 pupils from twelve to sixteen. In addition there were 187 professional or teachers' colleges, and 714 trade or agricultural schools. In education the Poles made an admirable recovery from an appalling position, but realised that there was still much to do.

In the mixed racial areas were many German, Ukrainian or bilingual schools; they were attended by 473,000 Ukrainian children, 72,000 German, and smaller numbers of Lithuanians, Bielo-Russian, Russian and Czech.

Wages were low; though the cost of living was not high, the Polish standard of life was only one-half of that of Western Europe. A farm-labourer got 900 zloty a year, about 13s. 6d. a week, plus, of course, the usual agricultural perquisites. Manual labourers in factories and mines averaged 21s. to 25s. a week. The huge differentiations in receipts so noticeable in Britain and U.S.A. were absent in Poland. The governor of a province received only £675 a year; a judge of the High Court, £500; a colonel in the Army, £500; and a police constable, 35s. a week.

There was a tendency for Polish wages to rise as the basic prosperity of the country increased and as industrial organisation in trade unions gathered strength. Indeed, despite the semi-authoritarian character of the régime, there were more strikes in Poland than in Britain!

Over-high taxation is a common complaint in all peasant countries. At first sight, the Polish situation was easy—before the world began to re-arm, Polish taxes consumed only 13 per cent. of the national income whereas the British figure was 23 per cent. The comparison is misleading. Most British taxpayers merely deprive themselves of luxuries to pay their quota: even on the lower wage ranges, the tax often means a smaller ration of tobacco or cinemas. In Poland tax means a deprivation of necessities. A tax of 1s. on a man earning £1 a week is much more severe than a tax of 10s. on a man earning £10. The remainder income is the vital figure.

The mood of the new Poland was far too optimistic. For generations Poles had longed for freedom: now it had come—surely it would bring happiness and better times. Instead, a period of acute crisis threatened the reborn state, as it was bound to do. It was to the credit of the Poles that, after a period of initial hesitation, they tackled it firmly.

The frontiers of Poland imposed a considerable strain because of their indefensibility. The land frontiers totalled more than 3,000 miles, mostly of open country. Thus the cost of security was high in relation to the national income—nearly one-half of the State revenue was devoted to defence.

Polish social legislation was surprisingly advanced—another refutation of the charge of "feudalism." The movement from chaos in her twenty years of freedom was remarkable. Conditions of labour were regulated in all industries. The forty-eight hour week was the rule: overtime, night-work or Sunday work was prohibited except by special licence from a labour inspector. In the mines, a seven-hour day prevailed, including the time for descending the pit and leaving it. For abnormally strenuous work the period was reduced to six hours.

Holidays with pay had been introduced—eight days a year, rising to fifteen days after three years with one firm. All juvenile workers had the right to fourteen days' holiday a year.

Conditions of labour for adolescents were controlled. Fifteen was the minimum age for employment, and then only on a medical certificate of fitness. A system of continued education had been introduced—six hours a week, with pay, up to the age of eighteen. Under no conditions were adolescents allowed to do overtime, night-work or Sunday work.

A woman was entitled to cease work for six weeks before and after confinement, and her employer might not discharge her on that account. She was allowed the necessary time—with pay—for feeding her baby. Firms employing more than 100 women had to maintain nurseries for children.

There was a range of laws covering workers' safety, compensation, health services and the like. The change from the repression of Tsarist days was remarkable. Pilsudski may not have been democratic, but he had at heart the interests of the Polish people, and he did get things done.

There is one important qualification to all this excellent and humane social legislation: it applied only to industrial workers. Nobody yet invented any scheme whereby a peasant need work only an eight-hour day or his wife have three months' leave to have her baby! Poland is not alone in facing the different standards of town and country: the problem is inherent in every state in the world.

Yet, of all the facts I have quoted in this section, the most significant are the figures showing the age-groups of the population. Not even Hitler, with all his terrorism, could subdue a race of whom nearly two-thirds were under thirty years of age! I am confident that Stalin is too wise to try.

IX

The progress of Poland in the inter-war years is all the more remarkable because of the appalling conditions from which the newly revived state had to commence: 1,800,000 buildings had been demolished in the war; 6 million acres of forest were destroyed, 11 million acres of agricultural land laid to waste; live-stock losses amounted to $4\frac{1}{2}$ million animals. Transport was left in chaos, factories were ruined and the currencies of the late, occupying powers were bankrupt. The war with Russia not merely devastated further areas, but added enormously to the financial burdens of the new Poland. Poland received no reparations, but was actually debited with a share of the debts of her late overlords! Small wonder that her first financial shock was a rapid slide towards inflation and bankruptcy.

The first difficulty was to find a new avenue for trade. Before 1914, 85 per cent. of Polish trade was with its overlords, Russia, Austria and Germany. Now Austria was broken and bankrupt, Germany almost a closed market, and Russia applied such severe economic measures of self-sufficiency that foreign trade was reduced to paltry figures—only 1 per cent. of world trade. Her principal imports were tools and machinery, and there was now no market for Polish products.

There are three essentials for high economic standards—natural resources, labour and capital. In Poland the first was restricted, the last very deficient. Nor were foreign capitalists or governments much interested: between 1924 and 1930 Germany received foreign credits at the rate of 9 gold dollars per inhabitant, while Poland could obtain only 1.70.

The principal industrial region was the Polish share of Upper Silesia. New mines were sunk, and a new railway carried coal to Gdynia for the export trade. Electrical and chemical industries were created.

The number of workers in all factories increased from 750,000 in 1925 to 900,000 in 1939. (Including artisans and craftsmen, mostly self-employed, the figure was 2,100,000: but even this was only a fraction of the total population, which remained predominantly agricultural.)

A merchant navy was built up to carry Poland's exports abroad. With the loss of her old Continental markets, Poland

turned to countries like Britain, with large demands for food-stuffs. Considering her limited natural resources and her constant demand for capital, the expansion of Poland's industry was remarkable, yet it was quite inadequate to cope with the continuous increase in the population.

I have referred to Poland's experiment in the Central Industrial Area—the Polish equivalent of the Tennessee Valley Authority. The first objective was the supply of adequate power. The reserves of water power in the Carpathians were tapped: some of the dams would have been much publicised in any other country, and foreigners would have been induced to pay good money to travel to see them. Had the war not interrupted the scheme, the C.O.P. would have been second only to Upper Silesia as an industrial centre, and might have gone far to solve Poland's most urgent problem—finding work for surplus labour in the rural areas.

Living standards were improved, especially in the towns, where some of the housing schemes attracted wide attention. Many workers' settlements were co-operatively built and run. A feature of all Polish town-planning was the allowance for flowers: balconies were usually planned to carry flower-boxes, and the effect in a big block of flats was often vivid. There was an annual prize in Warsaw for the best floral decoration of a house.

Polish architecture was Central European, with a lean towards Scandinavian standards. Simplicity was the keynote of the larger buildings, harmonious proportions being carefully studied. Pride of Polish achievement was the completely new city of Gdynia, which in its architecture and planning would not have disgraced any country in the world.

In buildings like hospitals and sanatoria, Poland had a vast leeway to make up. Again, the considerable increase of 21,000 beds scarcely kept pace with the growing population. On the other hand, public health services were much advanced—they had scarcely existed in Russian Poland—and many diseases were definitely checked.

Greatest handicap to every form of Polish endeavour was the low standard of economic life. Ideas were always plentiful, and the courage for bold experiment was never lacking, but too often capital resources failed. If in 1919 the Western democracies had been as interested in Poland as they were in 1939, the situation might have been very different, to the benefit of the world in general, as well as of Poland in particular. It is worth while pointing out that once more Poland has to begin again, for the devastation of 1945 is as great as that of 1919.

Such is a brief outline of Poland and of her territorial problems. Her internal difficulties, we have seen, were intense. In settled countries like Britain and U.S.A. we have experienced great inconveniences in reverting to peace conditions after years of war, and we had known comparatively little of its direct impacts. We can at least imagine the fantastic situation in Poland, with its legacy of currencies and laws from three countries. It is probable that we never gave enough credit to Poland for the hard work involved in her rapid recovery.

Problems like those of finance, economy, agrarian reform and political evolution were always of first importance, yet in Poland they were overshadowed by foreign relations, which in turn were dominated by the problems I have superficially described. It is natural, therefore, that we shall encounter some of them again. One or two have declined in importance under the stress of stern events: others are as disturbing as ever. Some have been "solved" by drastic methods, and we shall have to decide whether solutions imposed by force are likely to or should survive.

HITLER'S POLAND

I

THE GERMAN ATTACK OF SEPTEMBER 1ST, 1939, emphasised what had long been obvious—that the Polish frontiers were strategically indefensible.

The quality of the Polish Army was good, and its size was remarkable. Because of the youth of its population, Poland, with 34 million, could mobilise a bigger army than France, with 41 million. Numerically, indeed, Poland was the fifth military power in the world.

The equipment was good, by normal standards, but could not compare with that of Germany, where nothing had been spared to build up the most formidable fighting machine in the world. The Polish deficiencies were like those of the British: there was a lack of tanks and anti-tank guns, and of aircraft. Britain was able to survive until all deficiencies had been met: Poland had to fight it out with what she had. She was to make the sad discovery that valour is not enough: indeed, without arms it can spell massacre.

The aggressor holds every initial advantage. He selects the time and place of attack, and distributes its weight to the discomfort of his enemy. In this instance he was aided by geography. The Polish task would have been difficult enough had it been only a question of meeting a German attack from the west, but there were also outflanking German armies in East Prussia and in Slovakia. To make matters worse, Polish mobilisation had been delayed on British and French advice lest it might irritate Hitler! Thus hundreds of thousands of Poles never reached the battle area, for in the first days communications were hopelessly disrupted by overwhelming German superiority in the air.

The Germans attacked with forty-four divisions, of which six were armoured. These were the spearhead of the attack, and the Poles had no method of halting them. Handled with daring and skill, they plunged into the heart of Poland.

Retreat was inevitable, but the retirement was orderly. It was significant that whenever the Poles and Germans met on anything like equal terms, the Poles always won. On most occasions, however, the Germans held every advantage in numbers and especially in arms. There were occasions when Polish cavalry desperately charged columns of German tanks.

All observers agree on the fighting qualities of the Poles. They never lost hope, but fought back hard. The time must come when the German pressure would slacken—the invaders would outrun their supplies. Then the Poles would gain a breathing space, and prepare for a counter-attack: they recalled the apparently hopeless situation in 1920, when the Russians had been halted at the gates of Warsaw. But miracles seldom repeat themselves. While the Poles resisted the ferocious German onslaught, on September 17th a Russian army of a million and a half men crossed the eastern frontier. From that moment the end of Poland was merely a question of time.

II

Old diplomatists would be puzzled by modern usages. At the moment the Soviet troops invaded Poland, Russia made a declaration of neutrality!

A few minutes before the invasion began, a note was handed to the Polish Ambassador in Moscow. It declared that the Polish state had ceased to exist, so Russia was sending troops to "protect" the populations of western Ukraine and Bielo-Russia.¹

The Polish patrols could only offer a token resistance: such was the confusion that some of them believed that the Russians had come as friends! Against the Germans the struggle continued, hopeless though it was. Little pockets of Polish troops held out: Warsaw stood a siege, women and children fighting in the trenches beside their men. But no epics of valour could save Poland now. We have seen that throughout history acute danger threatened her whenever Germany and Russia were agreed.

The Polish command, which had not been inspired throughout, cracked under the strain. Marshal Smigly-Rydz took refuge in Roumania, thereby incurring the odium of his people. By Polish tradition, he should have died with his army: nobody could ever imagine Pilsudski withdrawing because he had lost a battle! From

¹ The Pact of non-aggression between Russia and Poland amply covered the situation. It read:

"Article 1. The two Contracting Parties, recording the fact that they have renounced war as an instrument of policy in their future relations, reciprocally undertake to refrain from taking any aggressive action or invading the territory of the other Party, either alone or in conjunction with other Powers.

"Article 2. Should one of the Contracting Parties be attacked by a third State or by a group of other States, the other Contracting Party undertakes not to give aid or assistance, either directly or indirectly, to the aggressor State during the whole period of the conflict."

Pacts and treaties will be freely advocated as panacea in the new Europe, often by countries whose primary impulse is war-weariness. We must not expect them to be enthusiastically received, especially in the small countries. In 1939 the peace of Europe was amply covered by a multitude of pacts, but at the moment of crisis very few nations honoured their signatures.

the practical point of view, Smigly-Rydz may have been justified. Indeed, thousands of Polish airmen and soldiers escaped to Roumania and Hungary, later to reach Britain as a much-valued reinforcement. But Smigly-Rydz should have set a moral example, it was argued: the Poles are an emotional people, and a leader's dramatic death could be more inspiring than the material considerations involved in a flight abroad.

I have written briefly on the course of a battle whose issue was decided before it began, for we are more interested in future developments than in military details. Two points are worthy of notice, however.

First, that the Polish love of Russia, never very pronounced, was not heightened by the stab in the back of September 17th, still vigorously discussed and fervently denounced wherever Poles gather.

Secondly, that the greater part of the million Germans domiciled in Poland acted as traitors or "Fifth Columnists" so systematically as to show that the treachery had been long and carefully prepared: consequently, we must not be surprised if Germans are not over-welcome in the new Poland.

III

Poland was again partitioned between Germans and Russians. At first the Russians came almost up to Warsaw: later they made a formal agreement and retired to the Ribbentrop-Molotov line shown on p. 85. It will be noted that in places this is considerably west of the Curzon Line.

The German section included the richest and most populous areas of Poland. In the fighting, many towns and villages had been devastated: it can be imagined what a target for incendiary bombs the timber cottages of the villages proved to be. Now a new terror began.

"Beat the Poles. Drive them to be sick of life. They must be exterminated." This sounds like Hitler, but is a quotation from Bismarck. The Germans now commenced to apply his policy.

Mass executions were frequent. Wholesale deportations began immediately, for western Poland, being incorporated into the Reich as a German province, had to be made German. Hence the Poles must be turned out to make room for German settlers. At all costs, the Polish population must be reduced.

The methods by which this objective was achieved are important. Comfortable people who have escaped the direct impacts of war complain that they have heard enough horrors: this plaint is usually a sign of selfish outlook or uneasy conscience. We can never understand the Polish attitude to the Germans to-day un-

less we try to appreciate the conditions of the German occupation.

In 1939 I wrote *The Story of Poland*, in which I quoted verbatim some cases described to me by Poles who had escaped, and whom I could trust. I now append one or two of their factual accounts, and will add others, for it will at once be seen that they have a direct bearing on the Polish treatment of the Germans when conditions were reversed, after our victory.

"My father was the mayor of his village," explained to me a young Pole soon after his escape via Lithuania. "That is to say he was approximately equivalent to your chairman of a parish council. As soon as the Germans captured the village they demanded five hostages. My father, the priest, the schoolmaster and two farmers volunteered. The Germans ran up the swastika flag in the village, and the sight so incensed a local youth that during the night he climbed up the flagstaff and tore the swastika down. Immediately this terrible crime was discovered the five hostages were paraded on the village green in front of the church. The entire population of the village was then forcibly gathered at the green, including my mother and myself. There we had to endure the indescribable agony of helping to dig the graves of my father and his friends.

"As the fatal shots were fired my mother collapsed in my arms. As I tried to support her a German soldier plunged his bayonet into my back. I can show you the wound. I was compelled to stand with my hands behind my head and march beside the five bodies. When eventually I was allowed to return to my mother I found that her mind had cracked under the strain—which you will readily believe. The Germans took her away, and some days later I heard that she was dead; so I determined that even if I lost my own life I would escape from this terror to fight to the end against such bloody tyranny."

Readers will perhaps take my word that this is only one of a hundred first-hand stories which I have gathered, each with only too ample confirmation. When I talk with these people, I am filled with a great despair. For years I have been addressing audiences in all countries of Europe, preaching tolerance as the only solution of Europe's ills; yet how could I expect toleration from this Polish youth, who dug his father's grave and who saw his mother driven insane?

He is a young man of great promise. If he has survived this war, it is not improbable that within the next ten years he may become one of the leaders of Poland. However great his control how can he fail to be influenced by the horror of that morning? The advance towards toleration, the only secure foundation for European peace, has not merely been halted: it has slipped back a hundred years.

Once there was a Polish city, clean and bright and prosperous, inhabited by intelligent and hard-working people. Their country was ravaged by an invading horde which appeared akin to barbarians, for men were killed indiscriminately and others herded in prisons without trial. Then, as the winter snows began to fall, soldiers of the invading army went round from house to house, ordering all inhabitants to leave within two hours. The victims might take with them some clothing, such as they could carry for themselves, but nothing else, none of their furniture, household treasures or valuables. As they left their houses they must put the key on the outside of the front door.

The unfortunate people, tens of thousands of them, were crowded along a road, hounded on by the barbarians. The young men were not there to help, for already they had been killed in battle, so the women and children and the old men trudged unaided along the icy roads, now swept by a blizzard. Sometimes aged or over-youthful feet would stumble, but there was no respite. With the cruel steel at their backs, people behind surged forward, trampling underfoot those who had fallen by the way.

"Never was a nightmare so fiendish," wrote one who experienced this hell. "A man who had been dragged from a sick-bed collapsed at my feet, but as I stooped to pick him up I was flung forward, for the press was so thick, and all about were soldiers prodding at any who hesitated. With their faces down, their shawls about their heads, the icy wind freezing their tears, women clutched their children and struggled hopelessly forward. Presently a woman whose time had come screamed out in agony, and fell by the wayside. Others would have attended to her, but were driven on. What became of her I do not know; I can only guess.

"For ten miles this march continued; then we were locked in wooden cattle trucks, fifty in each truck. Some had brought food with them, others had none, but all shared alike. Men, women and children were mingled in appalling conditions. For a day and a half the torment continued, as the cattle truck was hauled jerkily forward. The stench and distress can be imagined. In the first night a woman and a girl died, but their bodies lay in the corner of the truck. The girl died in fear, screaming. The minds of the children who listened were unhinged, and they, too, began to scream and could not be comforted. In the jolting, crowded trucks women in labour groaned and bore their children. Was there ever such a wild maternity?

"At last the trucks halted and the doors were unlocked. 'You can get out now,' said the armed guard. 'You have arrived.'

"Where are we?" I asked, for all about us was a great forest.

" 'You are in your own country,' he said. 'There are villages somewhere over there'—and his hand waved casually to the south.

"Our people climbed from the cattle trucks. They would have carried their dead with them, but the invaders refused. Instead, they collected such men as were able and made them dig a great pit, into which the bodies of those who had succumbed were cast. They then scattered the people in the forest. The strength of some had gone, and they lie down to die in the cold fury of the wind; others struggled onwards, eventually after some miles reaching a village; but even here there was no shelter. Other loads of people had been deposited by the barbarians days before, and even the barns were crowded. At last we found shelter in the church, which was empty; there was no one to ask, for the priest had been killed. The church offered shelter only, for there was but little food in the village.

"It was impossible to stay there; the villagers were kindly, but what could they do for so many? Those who could set out to walk towards a city a hundred miles away.

"Do you know what a Polish winter is like? Unless you have experienced it for yourself, you cannot imagine how cold it can be. Nothing in England ever equalled it. At the beginning of winter winds come sweeping down from the great plains of Russia. Sometimes they do not bring the soft snow with them. It is then that they are most terrible, for they cut like a whip and drive before them powdered frost, so that the skin stings and smarts. When you walk from a room into a street it is like receiving a blow in the face. Not many of them reached the city. Most lie in ditches beside the road; some of their bodies have been found by the peasants of the region, and every hundred yards along the road is a group of crosses."

When you read accounts of the expulsion of Germans from the new Polish provinces, it is as well to turn to stories like these. They do not condone Polish hatred for the Germans, but they explain it.

IV

The Fourth Partition of Poland gave 72,866 square miles of territory to Germany—48·4 per cent. of Poland—and 77,620 square miles to Russia. According to Soviet declarations, the Ribbentrop-Molotov line was the final word on the Polish question. M. Molotov, addressing the Supreme Soviet on October 31st, 1939, said: "One swift blow to Poland, first by the German Army, and then by the Russian Army, and nothing was left of

this ugly offspring of the Versailles Treaty." (Applause.)¹ We may excuse the words as the exuberance of a cheap and profitable victory, but Polish reactions were naturally more critical. They pointed bitterly to their non-aggression pact, and to the definition of an aggressor which had been adopted on Russian suggestion in 1933. On paper, indeed, Poland had been amply protected in the east: the Russian move had violated every pact.

The Russians proceeded with their usual energy to Sovietise their half of Poland. There were large-scale deportations to the interior of Russia and to Siberia. One Russian estimate of the deportations necessary was 800,000. Poles and Ukrainians place the figure considerably higher: it is important to note that Ukrainian nationalists met the same fate as Polish leaders. These included Socialists, trade-union leaders, and Jewish notabilities as well as priests, teachers and other professional men. Of the traced deportees, 52 per cent. were Poles, 30 per cent. Jews and 18 per cent. Ukrainians; 59 per cent. were of the working class—these mostly Poles: the rest were professional or commercial.

Russian methods are nearly always more subtle than those of Germany. The Nazis incorporated their share of Poland by brute force, but the Russians preferred to rely on the "will of the people."

A vote was immediately arranged, on the usual model, in the new additions to Bielo-Russia and Ukraine. It was claimed that 92·83 per cent. and 96·71 per cent. of the people voted, and that 90·93 per cent. and 90·67 per cent. respectively voted for the official lists of candidates. There was, of course, no opposition. The candidates were not confined to local Communists; they included Soviet officials—even M. Molotov and Marshal Voroshilov! The candidates were protected by 700,000 Russian troops—one to every eighteen inhabitants. Any potential opposition had been withdrawn before the "elections" began.

No one in Poland and (in view of subsequent events) few people in Russia pay any heed to the announced figures. The 10 per cent. adverse vote indicates that only about 1 million people (including families) did not want Russian rule. Yet in this same area the Germans were able later to find tens of thousands of Ukrainian recruits for their armies, and it is now necessary to move nearly 4 million Poles further west!

The elections were held in such a hurry that perfect arrangements were not possible. Among the elected candidates was a

¹ There are few statesmen who would not willingly forget some of the speeches they have made. This applies certainly to M. Molotov's speech on this occasion. In it he defended Germany as a state striving for peace, and condemned Britain and France for carrying on an imperialist war. Since he has never withdrawn his speech, he cannot complain if it is quoted against him: it is often and bitterly recalled in Poland.

Ukrainian lawyer, Vinnichenko. His name must have got on to the official list in error, for when the new Soviet assembled he voted *against* the incorporation of Western Ukraine into U.S.S.R.—the only delegate to do so. However, he was given ample time to reflect on his error, for he promptly received an eight-year sentence as an “enemy of the people.”

Nevertheless there is one point which should be stressed. The Russians in 1939 held a plebiscite which any Western democrat would dismiss as a fake—“swindle democracy” is the Polish term; but when the Poles took over the territories in 1920 they did not attempt to hold a plebiscite at all.

During and since the war we have talked a lot around themes like “no transfer of territories except by the wishes of the people concerned.” It is a principle which can be highly commended: we talked about it in the last war, but our attempts to implement it soon lost their initial energy, and they never penetrated to eastern Poland. We have seen that this area had a very mixed population, with the Poles in an actual minority. Yet the strength of the many nationalist movements indicates that not all Ukrainians would have voted for incorporation within Russia, which automatically meant the end of their aspirations. Thus it is impossible to say how a fair vote in the disputed areas would have gone. Had it generally followed ethnic lines, it would have shown proportions of about six to four in Russian favour: in that case the territory could have been divided proportionately, and minorities exchanged. But since 1939 the districts have been fought over, their populations uprooted: we can never know what they might have said had we really wished to settle territorial disputes according to the wishes of the people concerned.

V

On June 22nd, 1941, the Germans attacked Russia: their pact had served its purpose, and had kept Russia quiet while the Germans overran western Poland and western Europe; now it could be swept aside.

With the aggressor always holding the inevitable advantages, the Russians suffered a series of defeats and began a classic retreat almost to the gates of Moscow. Now the whole of Poland was under German domination.

Hitler's earlier protests that he only sought to restore to Germany the provinces lost in 1918 had already been revealed as lies. Considerable areas of western Poland had been incorporated in the Reich—they included Lodz and Cracow. Hundreds of thousands of Poles had been driven to the east, as I have described, and Germans settled in their place. The

territory formally incorporated as German covered 33,000 square miles. Of its population of 9 million, only half a million were Germans. By 1943 another 600,000 Germans had been imported, but even then the Poles formed 88 per cent. of the population. Since it was impossible to find enough German colonists, an intense process of Germanisation was begun. Bribes were freely offered among the mixed frontier population: a man who had two German grandparents was classed as German—the fact that he spoke nothing but Polish was dismissed as immaterial. His gain was a German ration card, far more valuable than the Polish. When this campaign failed, vigorous terrorism was reverted to as the instrument of policy.

From dozens of Poles I heard first-hand accounts of the methods employed. If a German soldier were molested, twenty hostages were executed: I have seen hundreds of the official German notices, naming the victims. Elsewhere the Germans simply seized the first twenty men they encountered in the streets and shot them on the spot. In one case forty students were shot because one of them had thrown a stone at a German soldier.

Such conduct had its precedent, but other types of barbarity were beyond belief. Most of my readers will have seen pictures of the concentration camp at Belsen. In comparison with the Polish camp at Oswiecym, Belsen was a pleasure resort. Never in a nightmare did I picture such fantastic scenes. The bones of the dead were piled in mounds, and the plight of the survivors was beyond description. I can assure my readers that the stories of gas chambers and extermination ovens are not imaginative fiction, but descriptions of fact. Small wonder that Polish memories are likely to be longer than ours.

This point may be more important than is obvious to those who are only too anxious to forget the horrors of war. In lands distant from the conflict we cannot visualise the intense hatred for the Germans which their conduct has aroused, but here is its explanation. While some people are pitying the Germans for the sufferings which have now descended upon them, Poles and Russians regard them as no more than just retribution. It is no question of a few isolated atrocities, but of an organised campaign, though people who retained their judgment emphasised that the conduct of the regular German Army was mild and correct compared with that of the S.S. troops.

There is scarcely a Pole who has not some individual story of horror, scarcely one who is quite normal in his outlook on the Germans.

One of my first acquaintances in Warsaw was a girl who had come from Lwow.

"You are married?" I asked as we walked along a street.

"I was. The Germans killed my husband."

"Oh! I am very sorry."

"They killed all my family, except a cousin. My mother was the worst case. She was ill in hospital at Lwow. The Germans needed the hospital for their men, so they took out all the patients and shot them."

"But why did they do things like that?"

"Why?" she echoed bitterly. "Why? What a funny question!"

In that last phrase we have the key to the Polish outlook. The Germans cannot look for pity while the present generation survives.

One of the most dramatic photographs of the war was taken in Warsaw. It shows one of the casual executions—of men rounded up as reprisals. The expressions on the faces of the victims are in themselves a moving drama. One man is crying: I learned that his wife had just had a baby—and now he had walked out of his house to be arrested by chance. Other men stood firm and erect, symbolic of their nation's stand against the aggressor.

At one time all executions were public, and the Germans gathered the people in the streets and forced them to look on as a warning of what might happen to themselves. The scheme failed. At the moment before death, many of the victims shouted patriotic slogans, and thereby confirmed their martyrdom. The Germans countered this by filling the mouths of condemned men with plaster, so that shouting was impossible. As supplies became short, the victims were stripped of their clothes and taken to the place of execution in paper suits. Ex-prisoners who escaped death told me how galling was this process. On a cold day it was difficult for a man to avoid shivering—and the Germans might think that he was trembling.

I was in Poland at the time of the Paderborn case in Germany. A group of Polish "Displaced Persons," on some nocturnal marauding expedition, were halted by unarmed German police. A fight ensued, and a Pole was killed. Next day the village was attacked by a Polish mob, and seven Germans died of their injuries. The British police took strong action: forty-eight Poles were brought to trial, and many of them were convicted.

The case was bitterly discussed in every village in Poland, and I encountered a great deal of adverse criticism. "Since when is it a crime to kill a German? Do the judges know what happened here?" I found it very difficult to explain the cold principles of British conceptions of law and order to people whose minds had been warped by their own intense suffering.

As apostles of culture, it was not unexpected that the Germans should loot Poland systematically. The German soldiers were more interested in their own comfort than in art treasures. They

burned anything which came their way in their quest for winter warmth. I have seen priceless Gobelin tapestries cut into strips to serve as blankets for the occupying garrison.

Some of the burning was planned. The German plan was to exterminate Polish culture, and with it the national feeling which is its invariable accompaniment. Books were destroyed by the thousand, as were historical buildings and monuments—anything which might remind the Poles of their national history.

The cultural offensive was a deliberate part of the German plan, and was prepared long before the day of battle. German professors were detailed to the special study of Polish culture and education, so as to be able to strike at the roots of both at the opportune moment. By 1937 the organisation was fully established, with headquarters at Breslau, the "Osteuropa Institut." Its head was an eminent art historian, Professor Dăgobert Frey, who made many cultural excursions into Poland. Thus, when the Germans occupied the western half of the country, he had his lists all prepared—the first of art treasures to be sent to Germany, the second of historical exhibits to be destroyed. Again, when the Poles hear arguments about lightening the German load, they remember that the attack on their culture, the life-blood of a nation, was led, not by Nazi thugs, but by the German intelligentsia. A moron can be excused a crime, but a university professor ought to know the difference between right and wrong.

The plan was cunning, in view of the fervent attachment of the Poles to their romantic historical associations. It was designed as a moral—or immoral—complement to the orgy of murder and slavery. Yet this campaign failed in its objective as surely as the plan of Germanisation. The Poles were never subdued. Their culture was attacked. They were half-starved—their daily ration amounted to 500 calories, against the British figure of 2,900. They were treated as slaves. Hundreds of thousands were murdered. Bribes were dangled in front of the survivors, for the German plan was to form a local government of the puppet variety. It failed completely. Hitler was able to discover leaders who would execute his will—in all countries from France to Russia, except in Poland: there were no quislings there. Had the Poles agreed to co-operate, they might have got far better terms under the German occupation, yet the ultimate gain to the Poles is overwhelming. No people in Europe can be more certain where it stands, for the Polish faith never wavered. And, in the event, it did a great deal to demoralise the German soldiers. Nothing is so discouraging to disciples of force as the realisation that the spirit of a nation cannot be broken.

Hitler has solved the problem of the Jews in Poland, by a massacre without parallel in world history.

On his conquest of western Poland, he first concentrated the Jews in a "Reservation" near Lublin. Next he established a series of extermination camps. The scenes were of horror beyond description. Men, women and children were herded into chambers filled with super-heated steam, so that masses of bodies coagulated. Then Jewish prisoners—awaiting their turn for death—had to burn the corpses in the giant incinerators. Such ruthless massacre has never been known. Even a world accustomed to horrors must be shocked as details of this appalling extermination are revealed, almost unrelieved by the slightest touch of human feeling. Never was such evil launched against an unhappy race.

I have already described the fate of the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto, where thousands of bodies now rot beneath the piles of rubble. By the end of 1943 the Germans boasted that they had "solved" the problem of the Jews of Poland.

In one sense their claim was justified. Of the 3½ million Polish Jews, just under 100,000 have been traced; another 100,000 may have escaped to Russia, and a similar number is reported among the displaced persons in Germany. But 3 million Jews have been murdered—a fantastic figure, almost impossible to visualise. Even among the German crimes, this atrocity must rank very high.

The Polish Government is anxious to give humane treatment to the survivors, but they all wish to leave. "How can we stay here?" tearful Jews exclaimed to me in many parts of Poland. "Imagine the memories about us: every stone of Poland reminds us of horror. Our families lie beneath the ruins: our culture is destroyed. We must leave Poland and begin again. We could never be happy here. The atmosphere is too horrible."

With this viewpoint I had the deepest sympathy. With such awful reminders on every hand, were I a Jew I feel that I could never smile again in Poland.

VII

In 1945 I was talking with a group of Poles and Russians. They asked what Britain proposed to do with her German prisoners of War. I presumed that, after a suitable period, they would be sent back home.

"What! You would return a million Germans!"

"Well, what do you expect us to do? You can't murder a million people."

“Why not? You can. It has already been done!”

It has. That is a tragedy. The sufferings of the Poles were not as tragically concentrated as those of the Jews, but they were worse than those of any other European country.

The point is important. Already, in comfortable countries like Britain and U.S.A., people are impatient because of the intransigence towards the Germans. We have to learn to appreciate the other man's point of view—always a difficult task. The new world can never be founded on revenge and despair. Neither can it be based on hypocritical advice to forgive from those who have not suffered; it is not natural to expect the people who have suffered so cruelly to forget as rapidly as we do. The Poles never loved the Germans: now the prevailing feeling is one of dark hatred. When the Poles proclaim that not a single German shall be allowed to live in the New Poland, their outlook can at least be understood. The Germans have always been bad neighbours, and from 1939 to 1944 they proved themselves tyrannous and brutal masters. Nor can all the blame be heaped on Hitler and his entourage. The Germans now have to pay the price of their defeat: it could scarcely be as heavy as that which they inflicted upon the Poles.

THE POLISH-RUSSIAN TRAGEDY

I

THE POLES WERE ALWAYS MORE UNEASY about the Russian occupation than about the German. They were confident that the Allies would drive the Germans out of Poland: they were never so sure about Russia.

Poles at home and abroad were furious at the partition of their country by German-Russian agreement. The effect of the Russian "stab in the back" was exaggerated, for by the time it was delivered the military fate of Poland was already determined. We have noted the conditions of terror which prevailed in the German-occupied area: they were not parallel in the East, but the Russian hand did not pretend to be light. I emphasise again that disciplinary measures extended to Ukrainian nationalists as well as to Poles.

It is easy for people remote from the scene of action to take a complacent view: or, as an event fades into history, to judge it leniently. I wonder how many politicians and newspapers would care to reproduce what they said *at the time* of the partition of Poland? One serious and influential London newspaper, which has since supported the Russian case for spheres of influence and for the retention of the eastern provinces in Poland, wrote in September, 1939: "To the Soviet belongs the base and despicable share of accessory before and after the crime and the contempt which even the thief has for a receiver who shares none of his original risks." Its opinions have since changed quite sincerely, but we can scarcely expect Poles—especially the hundreds of thousands who suffered—to forget quite so rapidly.

Nevertheless, the German attack on Russia in 1941 transformed the situation. Poles and Russians were now fighting a common enemy. At this moment, above all others, reconciliation between the two estranged Slav races was possible.

By this time the Polish Government was established in London. It had under its command a considerable force. Remnants of the Polish Army had escaped to Hungary and Roumania, and had thence made their way to France, there to be reinforced by Poles from all parts of the world. They fought gallantly in the Battle of France, and the survivors were withdrawn to England. Among them was a handful of Polish airmen who were to help make

history. The Battle of Britain was the first decisive battle of the war: if the Germans had won it, they would probably have won the war. They failed by a very narrow margin, for the resources of the R.A.F. at that time were limited: 10 per cent. of the German aircraft destroyed during the battle were shot down by Polish airmen: without their aid, the narrow balance might have been tilted the other way.

Now, as the Germans attacked Russia, the ardent Poles saw a way of increasing their effort. Their Government was directed by General Sikorski—a man of sterling character, who had fought beside Pilsudski in the wars of liberation, but who resigned from office when his chief pursued undemocratic courses. Sikorski was esteemed in every corner of Poland. Immediately after the German attack on Russia, he hurried to Moscow and made a statesmanlike pact with Stalin. The two countries should begin again in a new atmosphere of comradeship. A Polish army should be formed from prisoners of war to serve beside the Russians. The Soviet-German Pact of September, 1939, which partitioned Poland, was declared null and void.

There was every prospect of a real friendship in the struggle against a common enemy. But from the beginning everything went wrong. Sikorski was sincere, but others of the Polish leaders were still suspicious of Russian intentions; and these suspicions were even more widespread among the people of Poland.

The first disappointment concerned the formation of the new army. The Russians had taken nearly 200,000 Polish prisoners of war, and had evacuated hundreds of thousands of civilians to the Russian interior or to Siberia. Of all these, only 80,000 could be traced. This force was eventually transferred to the Middle East, under British command, as at that period the Russians were unable to feed and equip it. (At one time the Russians accused the Poles of being unwilling to fight—when the equipment consisted of one rifle to three men!) The new army was not ready to take the field for many months, for many of its members were in pitiable condition after two years in Russian prison camps, and needed urgent medical attention. Eventually they formed a fighting force of very high quality, and gave distinguished service in North Africa and Italy.

Yet Sikorski and his friends were chafing: 80,000 men should be only the beginning. Then the truth emerged. The Poles had imagined that the cancellation of the German-Russian Pact automatically dissolved the Ribbentrop-Molotov partition line. Now it appeared that the Russian interpretation of it was that this was the eastern frontier of Russia, and that the people who lived to the east were Russians, and must fight in the Russian Army.

The situation rapidly went from bad to worse. The Poles who had been suspicious of Russia were now confirmed in their outlook, and gained in prestige and influence. To crown the misfortunes of the hour, General Sikorski was killed in an aeroplane accident—the one man who might have saved the situation. Some of his successors were not as long-sighted, and forgot the needs of the day in the revival of memories of old wrongs at Russian hands.

Collaboration can only be based effectively on confidence. Perhaps it was too much to expect this to develop immediately merely because Russia and Poland had, for the first time in history, a common foe.

There are statesmen who base all their arguments upon economic themes. This is wrong. Nationalism is still a very strong force in the countries of Eastern Europe, including Poland and Russia. The lack of confidence was based largely upon historical prejudices on both sides, but it came to a head on the territorial issue—in which the economic background was of comparatively small importance. The difficult situation was fully exploited by German propaganda and intrigue: the Russians had been driven out of Poland and the Germans controlled the entire area, plus an important section of Russia.

In March, 1942, the supply of Polish recruits from prison camps ceased altogether, and in July the Russians arrested a number of Polish diplomats and officials who were endeavouring to trace the thousands of missing Polish soldiers. Six months later the territorial quarrel came back into the open, with a formal Russian declaration that the territories east of the Ribbentrop-Molotov line were Russian, not Polish.

The difficulties of the exiled Polish Government can be imagined. It is never easy for a government to give up what it considers to be its national territory; it is even more difficult for an *émigré* government to do so, for its authority is limited and precarious. For a Polish Government to give up cities like Lwow and Vilno would mean that it would lose every vestige of respect from its people. It was supported by the British and American attitude: we made formal declarations that we would never recognise territorial changes effected by force, and recommended that all such debatable and disturbing issues should be postponed until victory had been won.

This suggestion did not find favour with the Russians, who proceeded to conscript 100,000 Poles from the eastern areas for service in the *Russian Army*. Now even moderate Poles lost their patience, which is not a strong Polish characteristic. Suspicion feeds upon itself. The men who had all along declared their distrust of Russia could now claim that they were right. What a

travesty of justice! they pointed out: their frontier with Russia was to be the one drawn up by the Nazis, against whom both countries were engaged in a fight to the death!

Opinion abroad was very disturbed, for the situation was a veritable gift to Dr. Goebbels, who exploited it with his usual ingenuity. There was a violent division of opinion in all Allied countries. Then left-wing circles, which had tended to the Russian viewpoint, were shocked by an incident apparently unconnected with the main quarrel. Two Polish Jews, Erlicht and Alter, had played a big part in the organisation of the Second, or Socialist, International. There is a theory that the Russian prefer Socialists to Liberals or Conservatives, but this has never been confirmed in practice. In August, 1941—that is *after* the German attack on Russia—Erlicht and Alter were sentenced to death as “Polish agents”; they were, however, released a month later, which suggests that their crime was not very heinous.

The following year they were arrested again: it was stated that they had made pacifist appeals to the Russian troops to stop fighting, so that the world could have peace. The suggestion was scarcely practicable, but was fairly common in pacifist circles in all countries. Russian discipline is stricter than most, however, and in December, 1942, Erlicht and Alter were executed. They were known to thousands of high-ranking Socialists all over the world, and their sincerity was never in doubt. The effect of the “incident” was painful, and can be traced to-day.

The next phase of the tragedy was even more emphatic. Among the Polish prisoners of war were 9,369 officers. They had been subjected to intense Russian propaganda, but only seventy-four had agreed to join the Soviet ranks. The remainder were now urgently required to train the new Polish armies, but only a few hundreds were able to make their way to the rallying points. The Poles were pursuing anxious enquiries—especially concerning a large prisoner of war camp near Smolensk. Here 8,000 officers had been interned, but nothing had been heard of them since March, 1940. Now, in April, 1943, the Germans announced that their bodies had been discovered in a mass grave at Katyn, near Smolensk, and claimed that the officers had been murdered by the Russians.

Even I had known weeks earlier that the officers were dead, for the grave had been discovered by Polish peasants, and disquieting rumours had flooded Poland. Now again the Germans had a magnificent opportunity for propaganda. They exposed the bodies, and ran special trains from all parts of Poland carrying representative Poles, to whom they exhibited “proofs” of the Russian guilt.

It might have been advisable for the exiled Polish Government

to have accepted the Russian disclaimer—or, at least, to have postponed further enquiries to a more opportune moment. But the Polish Underground Movement, which was energetic and courageous, and which was directed from London, demanded urgent action: they reported that the Poles were so incensed that they might be persuaded to turn against Russia. Thus the Polish Government, spurred to action, followed the British precedent in the case of the shackled prisoners: since its direct enquiries to Russia over eighteen months had elicited no information, it asked the International Red Cross to investigate the tragedy.

The move may have been intelligible, but it was politically ill-advised: it revealed that there was no real basis of confidence between the two "allies." (Though some of the Polish leaders emphasised that their action was not intended as a slur on Russia, but as an opportunity to expose a German propaganda lie.) Further, Russia was not a member of the International Red Cross organisation. The reaction was immediate: the Russians suspended diplomatic relations with Poland.

Later, when the Russians had driven the Germans out of their country, they held an enquiry on the spot. The commission was entirely Russian, and included no foreign representatives. Thus its findings evoked little confidence in minds soaked in suspicion. Evidence was quoted to show that the 8,000 officers were murdered by the Germans, and the "incident" was considered as closed.

In my Polish journey I did not raise the question once: my objective was to narrow the rift between Russia and Poland, not to widen it. Yet the subject arose in nearly every conversation, whether with politicians or with peasants. I found scarcely a trace of a second opinion.

"My husband was one of the victims," said a lady, a casual acquaintance in Cracow. "After he was captured, I had letters from him. I was living near Lwow then, in the Russian zone. I heard from him in February, 1940. He was well, and still hopeful: the Russians were treating him reasonably, he said. Then complete silence. You can picture my anxiety. There is nothing so wearing as the lack of news. Late in 1940 I heard stories of the discovery of mass graves, but I refused to believe them. I felt that I should know within me if my husband were dead.

"So, when Germany attacked Russia, my hopes rose. Probably my husband had been sent to Siberia. Now he would be free. I was engaged in the Underground Movement. We heard how our Government was asking the Russians for the return of our men, and of the Russian excuses—that the officers had been transferred to Siberia, and it would take a long time to trace them; then, as the months passed, that this was wrong—that they had been left

behind, and that the Germans had captured them. Now my heart was heavy with fear. I could not help but listen to the stories of the graves in the forest.

"I should like to believe the Russian account. I am a Socialist, and favour a close collaboration with Russia, and know the harm which episodes like this have done. But nobody has yet answered this question: why did I never hear from my husband after February, 1940? Thousands of relatives ask the same question.

"I do not believe that the killing was a matter of policy. It may be that there was an attempt at mass escape, and that the Russians retaliated. Or some local commander may have lost his head. I do not know. I do know that my husband is dead, and that he and 8,000 of his friends lie in that dreadful Forest of Katyn."

Chronology is often of considerable importance. Six weeks *before* the announcement of the Katyn tragedy, the Russians had formed a "Union of Polish Patriots" in Moscow. From the start it was obviously designated as an alternative to the Polish Government in London.

The pattern of events is reasonably clear. For the first year of their war the Russians were hard pressed by the German oppressors; Britain could render only indirect aid, and considerable and important areas of Russia had been overrun. Then, late in 1942, came the brilliant Russian victory at Stalingrad. At almost the same moment the British struck at El Alamein—and U.S.A. forces entered the Western war. From this point onwards the issue was never seriously in doubt. It might take a long time to effect the final defeat of Germany, but the end was certain. Thus the Russians were able to establish a policy which had hitherto been tentative.

The Germans realised this. They had concentrated in their underground campaign on separating the allies, and in Poland and Russia they had an easy task because of existing suspicions. With the formation of the Union of Polish Patriots, it appeared obvious that Russia would take the earliest opportunity of breaking relations with the Polish Government in London, and would establish one of its own. Then, since Britain and U.S.A. supported the London Government, a dangerous situation would ensue, much to Germany's advantage. The plan was clever, and it succeeded: but it is surprising that the equally clever men in London, Washington and Moscow did not see its implications in advance. Maybe some of them did, but found action difficult.

It seems certain that the Germans deliberately held back the Katyn revelation to an opportune moment. Then, with the Poles already concerned about the Russian action in setting up a rival government, the Germans "broke" the Katyn story, naturally

charging the Russians with the crime. The reactions were as planned. The Poles fell into the German trap, and took hasty and undiplomatic action: so did the Russians, who made Katyn the pretext for breaking off relations with the *émigré* Government and transferring their attentions to their own protégés. The situation was sheer tragedy. The only people happy about it were the Germans.

The Union of Polish Patriots was at first derided by the Polish people. Scarcely one of its principals had ever been heard of. Its leader, Mme. Wanda Wassilewska, was a distinguished journalist who had married M. Korniechuk, a Ukrainian who was at that time Vice-Commissar for Foreign Affairs. The rest of the "Patriots" were nonentities; but they were Communists.

The Communist Party had been banned by Pilsudski at an early stage in his career: he suspected the Communists of being Russian agents. Yet the banning of a party does not mean its end, and in Poland the work proceeded underground. Then, in 1937, the Polish Communist Party was finally dissolved by the Comintern—that is to say, by Russia—because its members leaned to Trotsky rather than to Stalin!

It was not revived until 1941. Then it reappeared as the Polish Workers' Party—the *Polska Partia Robotnicza*, or P.P.R. A favourite jibe was to call it the *Placeni Przez Rosję*, which means "Paid by Russia." The new title was significant, and a clever move. Rightly or wrongly, Communism has become identified with Russia, and a new Communist Party would have attracted little response.

Agents were dropped in Poland behind the German lines to work on familiar lines by setting up "workers' and peasants'" committees. This failed, as did an attempt to organise a "People's Army." Then the Communists began to infiltrate into the Polish Home Army, the underground organisation controlled from London.

Their activities did not cease with the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943. In Russia the Union had ample propaganda devices at its command. It concentrated its criticism on the Polish Government in London, and on the Polish armies which had fought so gallantly against the Germans, but which refused contemptuously to transfer their allegiance to the U.P.P. Thus the Russians intensified their activities in forming a new Polish army. Its officers were mostly Russians, though some of them were of Polish descent. I met plenty of sergeants and privates in Polish uniform who were also Russians.

The basis of the U.P.P. attacks on the exiled Government and Army was not very secure. They were denounced as "Fascist reactionaries"—but had fought against the Nazis fiercely while

U.P.P. members were sheltered in Russia. After the death of General Sikorski in July, 1943, the new Polish Prime Minister was M. Mikolajczyk, who could scarcely be described as a "Fascist reactionary." He was the son of a farm-labourer: going into politics as a peasant representative, he opposed Pilsudski's methods as undemocratic. In 1939 he fought as a private soldier in the Polish Army, then escaped to France to join the new Government.

It does not follow that because Mikolajczyk was a peasant leader that he was necessarily acceptable to the Russians. It is not unknown in Britain and U.S.A., to say nothing of U.S.S.R., for Communists to condemn Socialists even more forcibly than Conservatives. (In 1945 I found important Russians very disturbed over the British election results!) Mikolajczyk had one essential qualification for dealing with the Russians—he was not afraid to speak his mind. It is quite a mistake to assume that the Russians only appreciate those who pander to them.

Mikolajczyk had an assorted team in his Cabinet, comprising members of all parties except those of the Right. Some had followed Sikorski's lead and were ready to forget the past: others could not. Some Russian memories were just as inconvenient.

Obviously, the territorial issue was paramount. If the exiled Polish Government had agreed to the Ribbentrop-Molotov Line, or anything like it, then the Union of Polish Patriots would have disappeared overnight. But the Government was in continuous touch with the homeland—many of the Ministers actually met as a kind of "shadow Cabinet" in Poland, and reported that Polish opinion was overwhelmingly against the cession of territory. Whatever Russia's ethnic claims, Poland's eastern territory had been seized by force. If this were to be the basis of settlement, then Hitler was entitled to keep the Channel Islands. So it was argued.

The wordy warfare intensified. The Russians claimed that the Government did not represent the Polish people, though its basis was a wide coalition. It was at least as representative as the exiled Government of Czechoslovakia, with which the Soviet had concluded a twenty-year pact. And it was far more representative than the Union of Polish Patriots.

Other Russian accusations were on firmer bases—that some of the Polish military leaders had expressed anti-Russian opinions, for example. So had other Allied leaders, but it did not affect their prowess against the Germans. There was long and meaningless debate about the Polish Constitution. The Russians now claimed that it was not legal, though they had not questioned its legitimacy when they made their pact with Sikorski.

Yet all these points were trivial, and everybody knew it. If the territorial issue could be resolved, everything else would

follow. Hitherto the Poles had felt themselves backed by the high-sounding British and American declarations about "no transfers of territory by force." This was a matter of principle, and an exiled government is without power, so can depend only upon applied principles. The Poles were destined to get a shock, and to find that political declarations can be little more than pious aspirations.

By this time the Russians had abandoned the Ribbentrop-Molotov Line of odious memory. (In 1945, when I broadcast from Warsaw, the Russian censor deleted a casual reference to the partition of Poland in September, 1939. Evidently the episode was to be forgotten.) The Curzon Line had been revived from its obscurity, and was designated as the new Russian-Polish frontier. It was hinted that territorial concessions might be offered to a "friendly" Poland.

Opinions in the Western democracies were divided. There was every sympathy with Russia's demand for security, though it was doubted if an extension of 200 miles was a real defence against modern weapons. Ethnically, as we have seen, Russia had a firm claim to frontier rectification, but the reason why the claim was extended beyond legitimate right was often overlooked. I have referred to the Ukrainian nationalist movements in Eastern Poland, as obnoxious to the Russians as they were to the Poles. Though they had been supported by Germany, they had a solid basis among the Ukrainian people, and the Russians had to confess their surprise at the ease with which their renegade general, Vlassov, was able to enlist a considerable army of Ukrainians to serve in the German ranks. We shall return to this question again, for it has some importance. Meantime, it explains why the Russians were anxious to include all Ukrainian territory under their sway—even though millions of Poles might be incorporated at the same time—in order that such nationalist movements could be dealt with firmly.

The dispute was moving towards a climax when Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt met at Teheran in the early weeks of 1944. On February 22nd, Mr. Churchill reported the proceedings to the House of Commons, and his picture of the Russian-Polish situation at that time is very clear.

"I took occasion to raise personally with Marshal Stalin the question of the future of Poland. I pointed out that it was in fulfilment of our guarantee to Poland that Great Britain declared war upon Nazi Germany, and that we had never weakened in our resolve, even in the period when we were all alone, and that the fate of the Polish nation holds a prime place in the thoughts and policies of His Majesty's Government and of the British Parliament. It was with great pleasure that I heard from

Marshal Stalin that he, too, was resolved upon the creation and maintenance of a strong, integral, independent Poland as one of the leading Powers in Europe. He has several times repeated these declarations in public, and I am convinced that they represent the settled policy of the Soviet Union.

"Here I may remind the House that we ourselves have never in the past guaranteed, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, any particular frontier line to Poland. We did not approve of the Polish occupation of Vilno in 1920. The British view in 1919 stands expressed in the so-called Curzon Line which attempted to deal, at any rate partially, with the problem. I have always held the opinion that all questions of territorial settlement and readjustment should stand over until the end of the war and that the victorious Powers should then arrive at formal and final agreements governing the articulation of Europe as a whole. That is still the wish of His Majesty's Government. However, the advance of the Russian armies into Polish regions in which the Polish underground army is active makes it indispensable that some kind of friendly working agreement should be arrived at to govern the wartime conditions and to enable all anti-Hitlerite forces to work together with the greatest advantage against the common foe.

"During the last few weeks the Foreign Secretary and I together have laboured with the Polish Government in London with the object of establishing a working arrangement upon which the fighting Forces can act, and upon which, I trust, an increasing structure of goodwill and comradeship may be built between Russians and Poles. I have an intense sympathy with the Poles, that heroic race whose national spirit centuries of misfortune cannot quench, but I also have sympathy with the Russian standpoint. Twice in our lifetime Russia has been violently assaulted by Germany. Many millions of Russians have been slain and vast tracts of Russian soil devastated as a result of repeated German aggression. Russia has the right of reassurance against future attacks from the west, and we are going all the way with her to see that she gets it, not only by the might of her arms, but by the approval and assent of the United Nations. The liberation of Poland may presently be achieved by the Russian armies after these armies have suffered millions of casualties in breaking the German military machine. I cannot feel that the Russian demand for a reassurance about her Western frontiers goes beyond the limits of what is reasonable or just. Marshal Stalin and I also spoke and agreed upon the need for Poland to obtain compensation at the expense of Germany both in the north and in the west."

Now the Poles had to face the bitter fact that the British and

American declarations were indeed pious aspirations rather than principles. They knew that the Russian territorial claims had been accepted only with reluctance, but that they had been accepted. Urgent action was essential. The Russians were driving the Germans out of Eastern Poland: the Union of Polish Patriots had been transformed into a Council of National Liberation and installed on Polish soil at Lublin. (Most of its original members were quietly dropped.) The new Council included fourteen Communists in its eighteen members, and, of course, enjoyed full Russian backing. A Polish corps, with Russian officers, was fighting in the Soviet armies. Unless drastic action were taken, it seemed as if Poland might become little more than a Russian province.

With a bitter heart, therefore, the Polish Government had to face modern "realism"—another word for the dominance of power. The question now was: would the Russians, at the height of their success, consent to negotiate with the London Government at all? The question was answered in the affirmative, to the surprise of many, in an invitation to M. Mikolajczyk to go to Moscow.

The reason soon became obvious. The Russians are "realists" in another sense. Now that they were on Polish soil, they quickly perceived that their nominees represented little but themselves, and that a hostile Poland might prove an inconvenient base or battle-ground. The Polish people were uncertain as to whether the Russians came as conquerors or liberators, and never pretended to recognise the Lublin Council. The Russians knew the difficulties of imposing an unwelcome régime, and the British and Americans persistently refused to recognise the Lublin Council. Hence the invitation to M. Mikolajczyk.

He had made up his mind that territorial concessions were inevitable. Nevertheless, he was determined to press for the retention of Polish cities like Lwow. There was a chance that he might have succeeded, but his mission was interrupted by another episode in the Polish tragedy.

II

By the summer of 1944 the Russians were driving the Germans across the broad plains of Poland. Already the Polish Home Army had been active. After moments of hesitation, it had been instructed by the London Government to collaborate with the Russians.

It was well organised and very large in numbers. Generally speaking, the activities of partisans were over-romanticised and exaggerated. There were long periods when the partisans of any

country must remain quiescent: their principal value was in the threat of their existence. In many cases, undue publicity given to partisans means that their regular forces were doing badly. Thus in the autumn of 1941 the Russian radio called upon the Poles for a mass rising. As by this time the Russians were hundreds of miles away, this would inevitably have ended in a massacre. The Poles pursued more practicable guerrilla tactics—harassing the Germans and their communications, and holding down a considerable army of occupation. Nevertheless, they had long awaited the day when they could openly enter the battle.

Despite the severest repression, the Poles were never devoid of news, and in great excitement they learned of the advance of the victorious Red Army. Then, by July 29th, the people of Warsaw heard the Russian guns: two days later the Germans admitted that the Russians had reached Praga, Warsaw's eastern suburb, on the other side of the Vistula.

For weeks the Kosciusko radio, operated by the Russians for the Lublin Council, had been exhorting the people of Warsaw to strike at the Nazis. Now, on July 29th, it broadcast a stirring call to arms. "People of Warsaw, the time for the last battle has come! Deal a death-blow to the beast of Prussian militarism! The hour of deeds has struck for Warsaw! Fight in the streets, in the factories, in the houses!" (There is an echo of Churchill in the Russian phrases.) And the following day: "The Russian armies approach Praga. They come to bring you liberation. People of Warsaw, to your arms! Attack the Germans! Help the Red Army across the Vistula! The million inhabitants of Warsaw must become a million soldiers who will destroy the German tyrants!"

Then the Poles thrilled at the news that their Prime Minister had arrived in Moscow; they connected his visit with the imminent liberation of Warsaw. So, as they saw German reinforcements rushing to halt the Red Army, they decided to emulate the people of Paris and to strike the blow they had long prepared.

The first strokes were successful. German communications were severed, and Warsaw was a chaos. The leader of the Polish Home Army, Komorowski—his *nom de guerre* was General Bor—soon realised that his situation was weak, however, and appealed to the Allies for aid. To the astonishment of the Poles, the Russians complained that the rising had been made on Polish initiative, without consultation with the Soviet Command.

Churchill and Roosevelt were not concerned with ideologies: anybody who fought against Hitler was their friend, and deserved their support. (The Russians were apparently disappointed that the rising was made by the Polish Home Army, and not by the Communist-led "People's Army," which indeed only existed in

skeleton form.) Then the world witnessed the final tragedy resulting from lack of confidence. British and Polish airmen made the precarious flight from Italy to drop supplies in Warsaw. For the first six weeks they were not even allowed to land at Russian airfields a few miles away, but had to make the 700 mile flight back to Italy. There were many acid comments about such allies.

The situation was as confused as ever. While the Russians refused to recognise the rising, the "Polish Patriots" broadcast on August 17th from Moscow: "We see in the present rising in Warsaw a manifestation of the fighting spirit of the democratic camp, and the Warsaw fighting is to us as sacred as any act of combat against the enemy."

Unfortunately, a month was to elapse before the Russians accepted this view, and began to send help to Warsaw.¹ By this time it was too late. The Poles in Warsaw, ill-armed, had been driven back yard by yard, and were now divided into four separate detachments. The sufferings of the inhabitants were terrible—the lowest estimate is that 250,000 people perished, for the German retaliation was true to type, bitter in its ferocity. On the sixty-fifth day of an amazing battle the battered remnants of the insurgents were forced to surrender.

The legacy of hard feelings from the Battle of Warsaw will affect Polish ideas for some time to come. A year later I heard the episode discussed in all quarters. Serious blame was allocated to the Russians, some of it quite unfair. The Soviet Command expected to capture the city on August 6th. When they failed to do so, many Poles suspected that this was deliberate—because the Warsaw rising was not led by their own men. The explanation is quite different, however. The Russians, advancing rapidly on the city, suffered a severe check, which could happen to any army, especially one operating at the end of long lines of communication. They were driven back nearly twenty miles, and halted there until reinforcements and supplies could arrive. Unfortunately, they did not announce this reverse, and the Poles imagined the Russians to be waiting deliberately just outside Warsaw when in fact they were held up twenty miles away.

I also encountered considerable criticism of General Bor—not of his courage, but of his ability. "A city is no place for guerrilla war," exclaimed one man, who admitted that at the time he had taken an ardent part in the fighting. More serious was the low effectiveness available: one estimate gave the Home Army in Warsaw

¹ The Russian apologia stated that the area held by the insurgents was too small for supplies to be parachuted. General Bor, however, declared that 80% of the British supplies fell in his lines: an American daylight attempt from a great height was a failure, as wind carried the parachutes away: and when at last the Russians did take action, they dropped supplies from low altitudes but without parachutes, so that most of them were useless.

only 1,200 rifles, with which to face the might of the large German garrison. I heard Bor described as an out-of-date knight—a Sobieski in the wrong century—a gallant man, akin to those who charged tanks with cavalry. His most serious critics called him foolish for taking any notice of the Russian calls to arms.

The terrible sufferings left Warsaw numbed. The total destruction of the city followed. Now, however, I found a great pride in the city's heroism. A cult of suffering runs strongly through Polish history, as I have shown in a previous chapter. This feature will explain many tendencies of the Polish mind.

Was it worth while? To-day many Poles would say "No," with the ruins of Warsaw in view, and in recollection of the appalling loss of life. Yet I noted that even the most practical of critics held a certain reserve of pride. Heroism is a Polish characteristic: I have heard it called a Polish "illness." Poles like to live heroically. During the German occupation, they took risks, which a logical mind would have classified as absurd, to run an underground newspaper or to destroy a German sign. In twenty years' time, however, the tremendous efforts and sacrifices of the Poles will find their reward, not materially, but spiritually. Romanticism still has a high value. It is possible to be too rational. The French, for example, are a very rational people. In 1940 they worked out as on a graph that their situation was impossible, so they gave up the fight. Then Britain was in an even more desperate situation. The British are not rational: they are more emotional than they pretend. Their friends abroad could prove that the British situation, too, was hopeless; but the British ignored the claims of reason, fought on—and won.

Materially, the Battle of Warsaw was a disaster. In the spirit it may prove an urge to the strivings of the Poles. At least they have no cause for shame in their share in the fight for freedom.

III

I have suggested that the effects of the Warsaw rising will linger for many years in Polish minds. They were strong enough at the time!

M. Mikolajczyk had gone to Moscow determined to bridge the gulf between Poland and Russia. While insisting on a free and independent Poland, he was prepared to negotiate an alliance with Russia which could meet all claims to security. He proposed to extend his Cabinet to include Communists nominated by the Soviet. On the territorial issue he was ready for a compromise—accepting the Curzon Line as a basis for negotiations, but retaining Łwów in Poland.

The prospects of agreement were killed by the hard feelings

aroused by Warsaw. General Sosnkowski bitterly expressed the thoughts of many Poles in a very undiplomatic attack on the allies who had refused their aid: he included Britain and U.S.A. in his vituperations.

A second circumstance was not propitious. The Russians, instead of considering the proposals of Mikolajczyk, referred them to the Union of Polish Patriots. This organisation had lost much of the little authority it ever had. Despite the broadcast quoted, it had attacked the Home Army for rising, and then condemned it when it was beaten for surrendering!

Mikolajczyk made five attempts to reach a solution: the need was urgent, for the U.P.P. had now been renamed the National Liberation Committee and was installed on Polish soil at Lublin. But now, at a critical moment, Mikolajczyk lost the backing of his own colleagues, and resigned.

Again it is important to emphasise that the opposition did not come from "Fascists" or "Colonels' Cliques," but from Socialists. Their leader, M. Arciszewski, was a lifelong Socialist who had suffered more than once for his faith. He was, indeed, a fellow fighter with Lenin against the tyranny of the Tsars. He was a sincere man who never compromised on principles. He did not appreciate the "realism" of our age, and had faith in a just cause. He and his colleagues took the view that Mikolajczyk was giving up too much to Russia. In effect, they abandoned hope of getting just terms for Poland, and decided that the ship might as well go down with its flag flying. They proclaimed themselves anxious to reach agreement with Russia on the basis of the Atlantic Charter, which everybody had signed, but nobody honoured.

Now the Polish tragedy leaped towards its climax. On December 31st, 1944, the Russians elevated the Lublin Committee to the dignity of the Provisional Government of Poland, and a week later recognised it as such.

The bitterness of the Poles was now redoubled. If Hitler had done this, we should have called it a puppet government, they complained. The members of the Provisional Government were Russian nominees, almost all of them quite unknown in Poland. As the Red Army advanced, they assumed authority, conscripting men into their army, instilling their own ideas. Their military commander even appealed to Poles fighting in the British zones to turn against their leaders! This had no practical effect.

The tragedy had now apparently changed its character. It had been assumed that the Russians had set up their own Polish Government because the exiles in London would not accept all their territorial demands. Now the Poles were anxious about the very existence of their country. Was it to be the "free and independent" Poland which Stalin had repeatedly promised, or

a Russian province? In a British parliamentary debate one far-sighted and knowledgeable Labour member, Mr. Ivor Thomas, summed up the situation: "It is melancholy to think that after more than five years of fighting in a war which we entered to defend the independence of Poland we should be debating whether Poland is to be a state at all."

The dangers far transcended the future of Poland. The whole anti-Fascist alliance was at stake: Britain and U.S.A. recognising the Polish Government in London, and Russia backing its sponsored Government in Poland. Again the tragedy offered ample opportunities for German propagandists, who for long had concentrated on attempts to divide the Allies.

Indeed, it lengthened the war. We know now that the German military commanders were ready to surrender in September, 1944, realising that the battle was irretrievably lost. The Nazi leaders argued, however: "We fight on! The Allies are so divided over Poland and similar difficulties that they are bound to quarrel among themselves. We have only to fight for time." They fought for time, and thousands more British, American and Russian soldiers died.

The problem was bitterly debated in every country of the world. Some people took the simple attitude, "Russia right or wrong." Others used the episode as a basis for anti-Communist expression. In between, the vast majority of people were bewildered. So many had lived in a land of make-believe, imagining the Allies as a united band of brothers. Some sections of the Press encouraged this view, becoming very sensitive about hurting Russian feelings—a procedure which the Russians did not appreciate and never pretended to reciprocate. A little of the typical Russian frankness in the Western democracies would have been more than useful. Because of this lack, the Polish case was poorly presented, the Russian over-emphasised. Yet the ordinary man had his own judgment. He read Atlantic Charters and Teheran Declarations, and then witnessed actions which manifestly contradicted them. Small wonder that he was very uneasy, for he realised that principles were being abandoned, which inevitably spells ultimate tragedy.

Such was the unhappy situation which existed when, in the early weeks of 1945, the Russian Army swept the Germans from western Poland, and when Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt met at Yalta in the Crimea.

IV

The declaration issued by Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt from Yalta read:

"We came to the Crimea Conference resolved to settle our differences about Poland.

"We discussed fully all aspects of the question. We reaffirmed our common desire to see established a strong, free, independent and democratic Poland.

"As a result of our discussion, we have agreed on the conditions in which a new Polish Provisional Government of National Unity may be formed in such a manner as to command recognition by the three major Powers. The agreement reached is as follows:

"A new situation has been created in Poland as a result of her complete liberation by the Red Army.

"This calls for the establishment of a Polish Provisional Government which can be more broadly based than was possible before the recent liberation of Western Poland.

"The Provisional Government which is now functioning in Poland should, therefore, be reorganised on a broader democratic basis with the inclusion of democratic leaders from Poland itself and from Poles abroad.

"This new Government should then be called the Polish Provisional Government of National Unity.

"M. Molotov (Russia), Mr. Harriman (U.S.A.), and Sir A. Clark Kerr (Great Britain) are authorised as a commission to consult in the first instance in Moscow with members of the present Provisional Government and with other Polish democratic leaders from within Poland and from abroad, with a view to reorganisation of the present Government along the above lines.

"This Polish Provisional Government of National Unity shall be pledged to the holding of free and unfettered elections as soon as possible on basis of universal suffrage and secret ballot.

"In these elections all democratic and anti-Nazi parties shall have the right to take part and to put forward candidates.

"When a Polish Provisional Government of National Unity has been properly formed in conformity with the above, the Government of the U.S.S.R., which now maintains diplomatic relations with the present Provisional Government of Poland, and the Government of the United Kingdom, and the Government of the U.S. will establish diplomatic relations with the new Polish Provisional Government of National Unity, and will exchange ambassadors, by whose reports the respective Governments will be kept informed about the situation in Poland.

"The three heads of Government consider that the eastern frontier of Poland should follow the Curzon Line with digressions from it in some regions of five to eight kilometres ($3\frac{1}{2}$ to five miles) in favour of Poland.

"They recognise that Poland must receive substantial accessions of territory in the north and west.

"They feel that the opinion of the new Polish Provisional

Government of National Unity should be sought in due course on the extent of these accessions, and that the final delimitations of the western frontier of Poland should thereafter await the Peace Conference.”

The declaration had a hostile reception from Poles all over the world. Nor were other opponents lacking. In another section of the Yalta Declaration the Atlantic Charter had been re-affirmed. How could this be squared with the forcible acquisition of territory? There was an uneasy suspicion that, instead of the envisaged world of international co-operation, we were slipping back to the days of force and power politics.

Yalta at least clarified the two main issues, both of which will be treated at length in subsequent chapters: (a) the political scene, which actually involved the whole question of Poland's future as an independent or puppet state; (b) the territorial issue, on which a final decision was made—in the east, apparently without right of appeal. Thus it would seem that this disputed boundary problem is to be considered as settled. Its history has seen many vagaries. Formed casually, in the days of Polish expansion when there was no Russia on the map: broken by force by the Tsars in 1772; re-formed after a war in 1921; then decided by arrangement between Russia and Germany, shortly to be locked in a struggle to the death; and finally following a line originally delineated, not by a British peer, but by a group of Tsarist *émigrés*!

V

Yet Yalta was not the final act of the Polish tragedy: it merely settled the theme.

In April the United Nations Conference opened at San Francisco. It was to decide the fate of a world freed from Nazi tyranny, but the only Allied country not represented was Poland, the first to take up arms!

Argument about the interpretation of the Yalta Agreement was intense; every phrase was debated. The Russians interpreted the reorganisation of the Government as involving merely the addition of one or two Poles from outside: the British and Americans demanded a far more representative basis. The bulk of the Poles inside Poland, and all without, continued to look to the London Government as the legitimate authority. Its “shadow cabinet” on Polish soil was as active as it had been during the Resistance period.

Then came another bombshell. Britain and U.S.A. had been pressing exiled and other Poles to come to terms with the Russian-sponsored Government, in the best interests of Poland. Thus it was learned with satisfaction that a number of underground

leaders had established contact with the Russians, with a view to consultations. They promptly disappeared: six weeks later, following urgent enquiries, M. Molotov announced that they had been arrested on charges of "diversionary activities against the Red Army."

British and American concern may be imagined: the Poles expected to join the Government were instead to be tried for their lives! And we had pressed their heads into the noose! Some of them had actually been parachuted from R.A.F. aircraft to organise underground activity in Poland.

The prisoners were duly tried, but those convicted received comparatively light sentences—significant in itself, since their offences were political. Several of them were released almost immediately. All had magnificent resistance records against the Germans. Their crime was that they did not want either Germans or Russians as rulers of Poland: in this they had the backing of all their countrymen.¹

The incident reinstated the old, uneasy atmosphere. By this time the fighting was over, and the Provisional Government was in charge of the internal affairs of Poland.

It was obvious that only drastic action could prevent the fate of Poland from being decided unilaterally. As a result of intense diplomatic work, M. Mikolajczyk and some of his colleagues joined the Provisional Government on June 28th. The resulting Cabinet still consisted predominantly of the members of the Lublin Committee, and the transaction represented a considerable Russian diplomatic victory—their interpretation of the Yalta Declaration had prevailed.

Again, nobody should suppose that one of the rival Governments consisted entirely of devils, while the other comprised nothing but angels. The Communists of the Provisional Government believed sincerely that the fate of Poland depended upon the closest liaison with Russia. It might have gained a

¹ As usual in a Russian trial, the prisoners confessed to a wide range of misdeeds against Russian influence. One of them, M. Zbigniew Stypulkowski, received a light sentence, and subsequently escaped to Italy. He claimed that he was cross-examined by the political police on 141 occasions for a total of 500 hours. "Under its treatment the victim gradually loses his sense of self-criticism and self-preservation, and becomes subject to hallucinations which make him an easy prey in the hands of his tormentors. Its object is to extract from the victim complete admission of guilt. This method includes the placing of the victim on a table with his hands firmly tied down, and by breaking his resistance with the aid of a powerful electric lamp shining over his head for five days and nights, as well as threats alternating with cajolery."

I spoke to one of the men concerned in Poland. He raised no point such as the above, which restraint was understandable even if it had happened to him, but did confirm that when he was taken prisoner he thought that he was attending a friendly conference with the Russian military commanders in the common interests of both countries.

bigger following but for its immediate acceptance of the Russian seizure of the eastern provinces. Once M. Mikolajczyk and his colleagues had joined it, the new Government of National Unity commanded a wider respect. An increasing number of Poles saw that the situation had to be accepted, and prepared to make the best of it.

The Potsdam Conference of July, 1945, confirmed the Yalta agreement on the territorial issues, and noted "with pleasure the agreement reached among representative Poles from Poland and abroad which has made possible the formation of a Polish Provisional Government of National Unity recognised by the three Powers." The Poles felt no such "pleasure": their division was as marked as ever—some, outside Poland, criticised Mikolajczyk severely for his acceptance of the *fait accompli*; others, inside Poland, welcomed him as a relief to a situation rapidly becoming impossible. For by this time Poland, free of the German armies, was beginning to face the intense problems of an uneasy peace.

This chapter does not make pleasant reading. It records a tragedy of suspicion. We have noticed the historical prejudice of Pole against Russian, due largely to the long years of oppression under the Tsars: then the resentment of the Russians at the War of 1919–20, held to be a blow at the Communist ideology. There followed the Polish alliances, interpreted by the Russians as a *cordon sanitaire*, but declared by the Poles to be designed to keep Russia and Germany apart, and so preserve the peace of Europe—and the existence of Poland, which was threatened only if Russia and Germany became friends.

In more recent years nearly all the resentment is on the Polish side. It was natural that the Poles should hold bitter feelings about the Russian "stab in the back" in September, 1939, and the subsequent partition of their country by Ribbentrop and Molotov—and the severe treatment accorded to the Poles in the Russian zone: their ardour was damped, when Poland and Russia at long last became allies, by the chilly Soviet backing of the reformation of the Polish Army. The territorial issue transcended all—though the Russians had a perfectly good ethnic claim to frontier rectification, the manner of its implementation outraged Polish feelings. The setting up of a sponsored Polish Government on Russian soil forced the melancholy conclusion that Poland was destined to become a Soviet republic, and therefore a satellite state of Russia, and this coloured the outlook during the Warsaw rising, when, even if the Russians were not very helpful, they probably received more blame than they deserved. Finally, the Poles were not allowed to choose their own government, but had to accept one imposed from abroad.

We can now proceed to examine the present situation. Yet we should always judge it against the background of history, ancient as well as modern. There is nothing as difficult to dispel as suspicion, and its fog had been dense over the Russian-Polish borders for 200 years. We cannot expect it to be dissipated in a day.

PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

I

MR. BEVIN ONCE WARNED US THAT it was always wrong to regard one set of contestants as angels and their opponents as devils. His advice applies especially to the Polish Provisional Government of National Unity, which must be considered frankly and objectively.

In theory it includes only six Communists in a membership of twenty-one. The remainder are described as Socialists, Democrats or Peasants. In Poland I found that they were generally classed as Communists, or at the most, Communist nominees.

The Russians, it is believed, camouflaged their supporters very cleverly. The Polish Socialist Party, for example, had a considerable following in industrial areas, but had always been anti-Russian. Its leaders were either in England or in the underground movement in Poland. The Russians therefore inserted their own nominees into controlling positions in this and other old-established and respected parties.

Suppose, to make the situation quite clear, the Russians had found themselves in control of Britain. Following their Polish pattern, they would have said: "Now, we know that Communism is not strong in Britain, and we want you to retain your own methods of government. Since you prefer two or three parties to the centralised régime, you shall have them. The Labour and Conservative Parties shall continue. However, we shall have to make a few changes in their leadership. We propose to replace Mr. Attlee and Mr. Churchill by Mr. Harry Pollitt and Mr. William Gallacher. Later, when the parties have been reorganised, we shall appeal to Mr. Attlee and Mr. Churchill to return to the ranks, in junior positions, from patriotic motives, for the sake of British unity at a critical hour."

Now I have the greatest respect for the ability of Mr. Pollitt and Mr. Gallacher, and it might be that they would develop into statesmen as good as Mr. Attlee or Mr. Churchill, should the opportunity be theirs; yet I feel that I should not be alone in my objections to the manner of their appointment. So it is in Poland. I met many members of the Polish Government. Some were

overburdened by their sudden elevation to high office, but others were obviously very able men, and were working very hard. In quality, this is probably a better government than that of 1939. Such is the opinion of many Poles, whose principal criticism is that most of the Ministers were chosen, not by Poles, but by Russians.

A Polish Socialist explained to me: "There are about 200,000 members of the Communist Party. The majority of these are recent entrants.

"There are three groups. The first consists of Marxian communists, ideologists. They are only interested in revolution, and national interests are meaningless to them.

"The second group I might call Polish Communists—many of them are not politically Communists at all—they believe that the only choice is between direct or indirect Russian rule, and have chosen indirect. Their aim is to soften the effects of Russian ideas: they want to apply a Socialist programme, but in their own way. They believe that Britain and America have virtually abandoned Poland, so that they must make the best possible terms with Russia.

"The third group consists of men who have jumped on to the band wagon so as to get a good job.

"Of these groups, the third is the most numerous; the first the most dangerous. They are the leaders."

There appears to be substance in the allegation that many of the Socialist and Peasant leaders are infiltrated Communists—some of them are quite unknown to the leaders of the legitimate parties, much more to the rank and file; and others, though of Polish race, were actually Soviet citizens at the time of their appointment. Political espionage is two-way: the Russian secret police had their information, but the Poles too were not ill-informed. In some cases the actual Communist Party membership number was known of a man who now called himself Socialist or Peasant. Of course, he might have changed his political views, but the fact remained that he had been a Comintern official, and was appointed to his post by Russia while still on Russian soil.

The President, M. Boleslas Bierut, was a printer by trade; when we met, we greeted each other as members of different branches of the same profession. His real name is Krasnodebski: it is common in Polish underground politics to take a pseudonym. He was born near Lublin, and in the First World War he served in the Russian Army, got caught up in the revolutionary wave, and remained in Moscow.

In 1923 he went to Poland as a Communist agent of the Comintern, subsequently conducting activities in Vienna and Prague. Back in Moscow, he became the head of the Polish section

of the O.G.P.U., then the secret political police of the Soviet, approximately akin to the German Gestapo. In 1939 he was given the task of Communising the incorporated areas of Eastern Poland, but after the German attack on Russia he was parachuted behind the lines into Poland. Here he endeavoured to build up a rival organisation to the Polish Home Army. He could not be blamed for his comparative lack of success, for Polish suspicion of Russian intentions was rife.

In March, 1944, Bierut crossed the lines into Russia with four companions, and was appointed provisional President of the National Liberation Committee. He had taken Soviet citizenship in 1923. In my opinion, Polish disputants make too much capital from this question of the citizenship of some of the present Ministers. Many of these are Polish Communists who were imprisoned in or expelled from Poland. Going to Russia, they naturally enough took Soviet citizenship, their future being so obscure. Yet there is at least *prima facie* evidence that a Pole with Soviet citizenship is a Communist, whatever his public party label may be.

M. Bierut is short and sturdy, and obviously a very intelligent man. I thought that he seemed very tired—understandably in view of the responsibilities and difficulties of the high office to which he was so suddenly appointed. He spoke to me directly and frankly, never attempting to hedge a question. He was quite outspoken, for example, on the question of Polish-Russian relations, and did not pretend that they were perfect. (I was told by others that he makes frequent and forcible protests to Moscow.) His personality was not strong, but I should class him as capable; and, if the occasion demanded, a hard man.

The Prime Minister, Edward-Boleslaw Osobka-Morowski, is another man who was completely unknown in Poland until placed in power by the Russians. He hails from the Kielce district, and got most of his education by diligent study at evening classes and the People's University. He was interested in the co-operative movement, and wrote extensively on its behalf. He was an active member of the Socialist Party, but never achieved more than local rank until he went to Moscow in 1944. His present position is somewhat precarious. Most Poles believe that he was inserted as Prime Minister in order that the Government could avoid the charge of being entirely Communist: he is believed to be subservient to the more vigorous Communist members of his Cabinet, and, of course, he has been disowned by the leaders of the "legitimate" Polish Socialist Party, who claim that he joined the Communist Party during the war.

A man well worth watching is the Deputy Prime Minister, Wladyslaw Gomolka. He is a fervent Communist, without fear

or favour—a man of ruthless energy and drive. Genuinely convinced of the righteousness of his cause, he is determined to see Poland become a Communist republic; his faith is such that it is not influenced by the fact that most people in the country do *not* want a Communist Poland. He showed his courage in underground activity during the war, and does not lack it now. He has the reputation of being a man who would risk everything to achieve his purpose. He dislikes his fellow Deputy Prime Minister, Mikolajczyk, intensely, and it is typical of his outlook that his most bitter charge was that Mikolajczyk planned to reintroduce Western Democracy into Poland!

For all his Communism, Gomolka is careful to emphasise that he is a Pole and not a Russian puppet. The future of Poland may resolve itself into a tussle between Gomolka and Mikolajczyk, two able men of strong personality. Theirs is a real clash of ideas—one-party dictatorship and democratic government, Communism and Social Democracy.

Among the men of influence in Poland to-day is General Michel Rola-Zymierski, the Commander-in-chief of the Army, which bids fair to resume its high place in Poland's national life. He is an old campaigner, a veteran of Pilsudski's legions, and was wounded in the First World War. Proceeding then to Paris to continue his military studies, he returned to Poland to occupy some important military positions. Politically, however, he collaborated with General Sikorski, and opposed Pilsudski's *coup d'état*. For this he was sentenced to imprisonment. (His opponents claim that he was imprisoned for corruption, but such a charge could have a political background.) Released, he went to France, but returned to Poland before the 1939 war began, and was involved in the underground movement. Quarrelling with the London Government, he went to Moscow with Bierut and Osobka-Morowski, and was later appointed commander of the Polish army raised under Russian auspices. Probably no one in Poland will be happier when that force becomes a genuinely Polish national army.

Minister of Public Security—a key position in a police state—is Stanislaw Radkiewicz, another Communist. A peasant's son, he became a teacher, but when a Polish army was formed on Russian territory he held commissioned rank. He was one of the original members of the Union of Polish Patriots, and has a reputation for thorough-going Communism similar to that of Gomolka.

A somewhat different type is Hilary Minc, often described as a "Communist Intellectual." He is a well-educated man, author of several books on the social sciences. In his office he has shown that he is no mere doctrinaire.

The Foreign Minister, Wincenty Rzymowski, is a representative of the Democratic Party, a lawyer and journalist by profession, and a well-travelled man. I was especially interested in his deputy, Modzelewski, a very astute and intelligent man. (My stock with him rose obviously when we discussed the British elections: he was surprised at the vote against Churchill, whom he had met at Potsdam. I argued that it was not a vote against Churchill, but against Chamberlain.) I found him better informed on conditions among the Polish forces abroad than most of his colleagues: and he certainly appreciated the fighting qualities of the Polish formations.

Of the four "official" parties in the Government, the Communist is one of the smallest, but easily the most influential, quite apart from the fact that many other members of the Cabinet are disguised Communists, near-Communists or Communist nominees. The Communist Party knows exactly what it wants, and is prepared to follow Lenin's advice, achieving power by methods unhampered by ethical considerations. Political police, censorship and ceaseless propaganda are the main weapons. Their cumulative effect may be to alter some Polish political opinions, but most Communists recognised that the people holding them would still be Poles.

II

The party background is becoming somewhat complicated.

At first the Provisional Government, exclusively appointed by Russia, contained members of four parties, it being recalled always that Polish Socialists, for example, claimed that the "Socialists" in the Government were really Communists who had been infiltrated into the party.

The basic party is the Polish Workers Party, *Polska Partia Robotnicza*, or P.P.R. As I have explained, this is the Communist Party proper, the name having been adopted because of the unpopularity of Russian Communism in Poland. Its members include besides M. Bierut, the First Deputy Premier, M. Wladislaw Gomolka, of whom more may be heard, and five other Ministers.

Next comes the Polish Socialist Party, *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*, or P.P.S. Its leader is the Prime Minister, M. Edward Osobka-Morowski, and it has five representatives in the Government. Some leaders of the pre-war Socialist Party, like M. Zulawski, have now teamed up with its new form.

The Democratic Party, *Polskie Stronnictwo Demokratyczne*, or P.S.D., is a near-Communist organisation, not important in numbers, or influence, and providing only one representative.

The fourth party is that of the Peasants, *Polski Stronnictwo Ludowe*, or P.S.L. If this were what it purported to be, it should be the most important of all in a country where 60 per cent. of the men are peasants. It has six seats in the Government.

These are the four official parties. For practical purposes, they are ranked in Poland as the Communist Party, and in leadership at least this suggestion has reasonable foundation. Each has its own newspaper, but it would take a clever man to find any difference in the advocated policies. Yet I noted many interesting possibilities. In Katowice I asked a girl in a political uniform: "Are you a Communist?"

"No," she replied indignantly. "I am a Socialist—a Polish Socialist."

The situation is very intriguing. The Communists, directly or indirectly, have assumed the leadership of the four parties, but will the parties eventually run away with the leaders?

Thus, when M. Mikolajczyk returned to Poland, he found that his Peasants' Party had been taken over by others. The situation was scarcely tolerable, and in August, 1945, he was allowed to form a New Peasants' Party. It is not an opposition party—Mikolajczyk is a Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture—but it does not come within the Communist *bloc*. It aims at close collaboration with other parties in a Government of National Unity to face present difficulties, co-operation with Russia and friendship with the Western democracies, and a moderate Socialist programme. Its following is very large: in September, 1945, I would have described M. Mikolajczyk as the most popular man in Poland—he had a monarch's reception on his return to Poland—not only because of his own worth, but because he represented contact with the West. He has enemies among his colleagues who appreciate his hold on the country, knowing that they themselves could not get a majority by normal democratic methods. His standing is influenced strongly by the fact that he represents democracy in British and American eyes; were he to be dropped, it is possible that our recognition of the Government might be withdrawn, a step which would be highly unpopular in Poland. His task is uneasy, and he deserves well of his country. We shall certainly hear of him again. By the time this book appears Mikolajczyk may be out of office, dead, or Prime Minister of Poland.

Now, knowing the political astuteness of the Communists, I was surprised that they had deliberately limited the potential opposition to one party, which in an election would gather to itself all unattached voters. It needed the Budapest municipal elections to point the danger. There everything had seemed well under control: the Communists and Socialists were presenting a

combined list, with Russian backing, and the Russians were in military occupation, the power on and behind the scene: the only opposition party was that of the Smallholders, and though there are plenty of peasants in Hungary, there are none in Budapest. It looked like a walk-over, yet the Smallholders won a decisive victory.

The reason was apparent. There were still Conservatives and liberals in Budapest: it is not yet a crime to be a Conservative or a Liberal. Deprived of their own parties, they voted Smallholder as the next best thing.

The reaction in Poland was the one I had anticipated: the formation of another party to spread and divide the potential opposition. M. Popiel was permitted to revive the Christian Democratic Party. Basically it is a Catholic organisation, considerably to the left of where it stood in pre-war days. (I found many of its members very critical of its present liaison with the Communists.) It is akin to the similar parties in France and Italy, and in view of the strength of the Catholic Church in Poland it may become very popular if it is allowed to develop freely. Its new title is the Labour or "Work" Party.

Other features of the Budapest election stimulated anxious thought. Examination of the results by polling districts revealed the certainty that not merely Conservatives and Liberals but tens of thousands of Socialists had also voted Smallholder, because they did not like the firm alliance with the Communists. Another point was the anti-Russian feeling: an occupying Power can never expect popularity, and the Russian reparation policy offended the Hungarians. The Polish background is not dissimilar. I met Communist leaders who confessed quite frankly concern about the future status of their party. They were not wicked schemers, but believed sincerely that in Communism lay the best hopes for Poland. They realised quite well that they faced an uphill task in converting their fellow Poles.

All other parties are at present suppressed, but that does not mean that the ideas they represent do not exist. The strength of the Nationalist Party is probably greater to-day than many people would care to recognise. Some of my Communist friends argued that in an open election to-day Nationalists would get a majority and would establish a reactionary government. I doubt if this would be possible. Like many other countries, Poland has swung to the Left, though its preference is for moderate socialism rather than for violent and revolutionary methods.

The Provisional Government, even though broadened by the inclusion of non-Communists, is still Communist-dominated, and it cannot pretend to reflect the feelings of the bulk of the Polish people. Yet for the time being it is supported by a considerable

majority. I heard a frequent opinion: "A Communist government ought to be able to get better terms from Russia than any other, anyway," which does not follow at all. Generally, when people of very different political opinions indicated their support of the Government, they pointed to the alternatives: (a) political diatribes and no action, as in France; (b) civil war, as in Greece; (c) direct Russian rule. This last is a decisive factor. The Poles are prepared to reorientate their foreign policy, and to co-operate with Russia, but they are still Poles. I met Conservatives who were working loyally with the Government on the grounds that they would rather be ruled by Polish Communists than by Russian Communists.

III

This question of Polish-Russian relations is still one of major importance. It could not be claimed as being easier now than it was before the war: the Poles believe that they have much to forgive.

In Warsaw, I noticed, the Russian soldiers were ostracised or ignored. There was no suggestion of fraternisation between them and the ordinary people of Poland. Later, in Katowice, I met a girl who had been taking part in a political procession.

"Do you go out with Russian soldiers?" I asked in the course of conversation.

"No; and I'd like to see any girl in our factory who did!" she replied almost fiercely.

A Polish Communist admitted that he himself did not fraternise. "We are polite," he explained, "but we shall be glad when the Russian troops can be withdrawn. We want a Communist *Poland*, not an eighteenth republic of the U.S.S.R."

(Yet, if the Russian troops *were* withdrawn, it is probable that the régime would collapse.)

"Even in our Socialism we want to be as unlike Russia as possible," another explained. "Thus, when we divided up the land among the peasants, we kept some large estates for use as experimental collective farms. We dare not call them collective farms; that would smell of Russia, and our peasants would not look at them. So they are called mutual aid farms."

I write this section with regret, for until there is a basis of real friendship between Russia and Poland, the course of events in Eastern Europe cannot be other than precarious. Not the most optimistic man would pretend that the path of friendship is being smoothed by present events. Every army of occupation, however beneficent, can outstay its welcome. The Russians received a dubious reception: they were warmly welcomed as the conquerors of the Germans, but judgment was reserved until the character

of the Russian intentions became clear. Their political moves were disliked, and intensified the old prejudices. Then the gap between the races was widened by the conduct of the Russian army.

All over Europe complaints are heard.¹ Not only among the civilian populations, but in the British and American armies the reputation of the Russian forces has been sadly lowered. Many of the stories current have been grossly exaggerated: they are a gift to Germans who are still trying to divide the Allies with a view to a third world war. Yet the complaints have a basis of truth. In some Russian units discipline, once so strict and firm, has considerably relaxed.

Every night in Warsaw I heard outbreaks of shooting. The Russians blamed the Poles, and the Poles blamed the Russians. Both were right.

One day I went to an outlying suburb, where houses were still standing, very overcrowded. I saw a group of Russian soldiers loot two shops. It was quite simple: they just walked in and helped themselves, despite the protests of the shopkeepers.

As the men came out, loaded up with goods, I noticed a Polish militiaman—or policeman—standing by.

"Don't you do anything?" I asked.

"What can I do? They are Russians."

His reply was very revealing.

All over Poland I heard bitter complaints of Russian looting. Everywhere I was warned never to stray from well-lighted main streets at night.

The time came when I decided that I must test for myself the accuracy of the countless stories I had heard.

"It is appalling," said the Governor of one county, a Polish Communist. "If you went out in this town after dark, you would be held up in twenty minutes."

I removed my money and watch and went out. The Governor was quite wrong—by ten minutes. The episode was disquieting, and not good for the nerves: it is not pleasant when a man sticks his automatic into your ribs while his companion makes a rapid search. At the moment when they appeared likely to take my jacket I mentioned that I was English, and they promptly decamped.

¹ There are plenty of complaints about other armies beside the Russian. The American forces on the Continent have added little to the popularity of their country, and even in Belgium and Holland the people are anxious to see the British troops withdrawn. This is natural enough. Most people prefer a house of their own, not burdened with in-laws or billetees. So it is with countries. I would class the British army in Italy as the best-behaved army of occupation in Europe to-day, yet most Italians will be glad to see the back of it, save for the danger of civil war when it withdraws.

One Government official in Warsaw had to walk home every night. His most precious possession was his wrist watch, a favourite objective of robbers. He showed me his simple but ingenious method of preserving it. His wife had sewn a hook inside his shirt, and for his journey the watch dangled from the back of his neck.

Reports of rape were even more serious. I heard tearful accounts from the women concerned how they were held down while Russians took their pleasure.

It should be emphasised that no army in the world is free from excesses. Yet Russian officers of rank admitted that the number of cases here was far too high. On one occasion a Polish Minister complained direct to Stalin, who took urgent and drastic action, but unfortunately its effects soon faded.

"Our men have lived in a state of unnatural tension for years," a Russian explained. "You cannot picture their privations in the winter war. Like your men, all they wanted to do was to beat the Germans and get home. Now they have beaten the Germans, but obviously all of them cannot get home. Further, our transport is so strained that we cannot grant home leave like you do; some men have had no leave since the beginning of the war. So, with the stress of the fighting war over, their mental resolution has relaxed, and with it their discipline."

Moreover, the complaints of the Polish peasants are probably more serious than those of the townspeople. It is the custom of the Russian Army to live on the land as far as is practicable—as my friend explained, transport was a major difficulty at every stage of the campaign. Thus peasant stocks have been requisitioned, first by Germans, then by Russians. In return, the peasants got a piece of paper to which they attach no value whatever. Complaints about Russian requisitioning were even more bitter than those about the Germans.

Once discipline fails, the requisitioning process can lead directly to looting. A Russian soldier is sent to a farm; he presents a piece of paper, and takes away a cow. Later, when he wants money, he takes away a cow without presenting a piece of paper.

The extent of the looting could be judged by the number of cases I witnessed in my casual journey. Sometimes it was blatant. I saw two Russians driving off a cow, followed by a tearful, protesting peasant and his family: standing by were other Russians, including noncommissioned officers.

This is far more important than the normal uneasy aftermath of war. Useless for the Russians to preach the communistic brotherhood of man to that peasant when they had stolen his cow.

Poles admitted that the situation was better than it had been, since the number of Russian troops had been considerably

reduced. In the new provinces, however—we shall visit them in a later chapter—the Russians are in full military occupation, and I encountered a spate of violent complaints.

Some of the incidents were trivial, but very irritating. I stayed in one house which intrigued me immensely. Its owner had been the local bank manager, a German, who had made good his escape: his house was then occupied by the Polish headman of the village, a peasant.

The situation offered an absorbing study. The house was a pleasant eight-roomed villa, nicely furnished, far above the standard of the cottage the headman had left. His wife had decided to move up with her new surroundings, but her husband was still a peasant. He greeted me, then took off his jacket. A reproving word from his wife, and he grumbled as he donned it again. So I took off mine, and we were friends.

"This house always makes me feel dirty," he complained.

However, it had a nice bathroom, but the bath was filled with babies' nappies. There was a lavatory in the bath-room, but no lock on the door: as I shaved next morning, a good-looking girl of about sixteen entered and used the lavatory without the slightest embarrassment.

Yet the lady of the house was a proud woman. The furniture shone with her energetic polishing, and her husband grumbled that he was always beating carpets. As we sat, talking, a car stopped outside, and a Russian soldier entered. He announced that he needed a strip of carpet for the floor of his car. The woman got up to search for a suitable piece, but the soldier was impatient. He drew his jack-knife and hacked off a square yard of the drawing-room carpet.

It was senseless. He had spoiled a carpet worth at least £100. I only understood about one word in ten of the comments of the headman's wife, yet no doubt I could have written down a fairly accurate translation!

In a neighbouring village I entered a cottage at random. Two old people sat 'on boxes: the little room was a picture of bare desolation.

"What has happened?" I asked.

"The Russians came!"

It is a bitter complaint that the Russians, when collecting their legitimate booty from Germans, are not sufficiently careful, and collect it from the Poles as well. One well-based complaint concerned the long trails of German cattle to Russia; we shall meet them later.

In the Russian zone of Germany 500 cattle are collected. Half a dozen Russian "displaced persons" are to work their passage home by driving the cattle to Kiev. They are to provision

themselves by applying to Russian depots along the route. But cows are poor travellers, and sometimes there is no Army depot handy; yet the guards must eat, and drink. So they call in at a Polish farm, and do a deal with the peasant. He gets a cow in return for bread and vodka.

Then, as they approach their own frontier, the Russians get nervous. They set off with 500 cows, and now there are only 480. There will be a row about this. So they promptly loot twenty cows from neighbouring farms. In the total, Poland does not lose, but the feelings of the peasants who were robbed can be imagined.

In one village a woman invented a new word. She complained that she had lost a horse.

"What happened to it?" I asked.

"It was Russianed!"

In the industrial centres complaints were just as widespread, but in a different form. The Russians had been removing machinery from German factories, but evidently had not known where the frontier ran, for they had removed Polish machinery as well! It is annoying when you are thrown out of work owing to the action of your enemies; even more so when you are thrown out of work by the action of your friends.

Unfortunately, I shall have to refer to this theme more than once, for it is straining Polish-Russian relations at a time when friendship is imperative. It adds new fuel to the anti-Russian flames, which were already well enough supplied with combustible material.

Here is a striking commentary on the effects of Russian actions, and on the intransigent nationalism of the Poles. Poland is ruled by a Communist-dominated, largely Russian-nominated and controlled Government, which has its own political police. Yet in one day in Poland I heard more anti-Russian comment than I would in a month in England. And the commentators were not feudal magnates, but workers and peasants.

IV

This last paragraph raises another important subject, political liberty in Poland.

It will be noted that earlier I said that someone was "permitted" to form a political party. There is no freedom of political association in Poland. All parties are strictly regulated by the Government. Even the two "unofficial" parties permitted to date only received the most meagre allocation of propaganda opportunities.

Yet there is freedom of political expression and criticism: if it

were legally restricted, it might be necessary to arrest 90 per cent. of the Polish population.

Further, I can add my own testimony. On one or two occasions I had difficulty with Russian regulations, but from the Poles I was given complete freedom of movement, observation and enquiry. The only restraints on my movements were those of lack of transport, and these I usually managed to overcome.

I have never encountered such freedom in any totalitarian state, whatever its colour. I argued with one of the most important Communist Ministers. "I shall be able to apply my own test as to whether Poland is going to be democratic or totalitarian. When I get back to England, I shall write a book about Poland. I shall describe exactly what I saw, and express my opinions frankly, criticising as well as approving. It will be interesting to see if I am invited back to Poland." He smiled and said: "Don't worry. You will come back."

Mr. Bevin, in his first important speech as Foreign Minister, referred to the question of the political police in Poland, which "had not yet been cleared up." It does still exist, under Russian direction. People spoke to me freely because I was English: they are more cautious in dealing with strangers from their own country. The English have many faults, but are never suspected of being members of a secret police force.

One Minister spent a long time persuading me that there were no political prisoners in the Polish jails or concentration camps. There were some "war criminals," he agreed, but his account of them was not very satisfying. Poland was remarkably free of quislings or even minor collaborators, and the cases he quoted were of men who had been reluctant to accept the Communist régime.

Two days later I was passing through a provincial town. All traffic was held up for a procession, a ceremonial funeral of three soldiers. I mingled with the crowd, and learned the circumstances. The town jail had been stormed by "partisans" from the forests, and the three soldiers had been killed in the fight: 700 political prisoners had been released.

The following day I met two of them. They were on their way to give themselves up! I asked their crime, but they had not yet been charged, so did not know it: they had been landowners, and were suddenly deprived of land and liberty alike. They did not pretend to enjoy prison life, but proposed to return, lest reprisals should fall upon their wives and children. Not even liberty could count against such a possibility.

I heard innumerable stories of men and women arrested suddenly in the middle of the night: of others who simply disappeared. Estimates of the number of political prisoners varied

from none to 100,000. The latter figure is probably grossly exaggerated, but the basic fact is that there *are* political prisoners in Poland. The Government recently claimed that 42,000 had been *released*.

In September, 1945, an amnesty was announced, but it was not very wide in its effects. It applied only to prisoners who had been committed for offences with a possible sentence of less than five years: each case was to be considered individually, and there were all kinds of loophole provisions whereby "enemies of the people" could still be held. An "enemy of the people" is normally an opponent of the Government.

One Polish official admitted that the "security" staff now comprised four times the numbers under the "semi-dictatorship" of Pilsudski. He urged the necessity of uprooting Nazi ideas as the excuse, but I found more Nazi methods in official use than Nazi ideas in Polish minds.

"We have to be stern," a Pole argued. "You talk of freedom. Is it right to give freedom to the enemies of freedom? Suppose I wrote a book about mushrooms, and described as harmless certain species which are poisonous. I might lead many people to their deaths. Hence our forcible restraints."

His analogy was strained. Ideas are not mushrooms. It is possible to decide scientifically which mushrooms are harmless and which poisonous, but who is to decide about ideas? If the judge is to be one party to the dispute, then there can be little hope of justice. Censorship and secret police can never be part of a democratic organisation, but only of a totalitarian régime which is afraid of opposition.

V

In one broadcast from Warsaw I described the magnificent fight of the Polish forces abroad: how they shot down 10 per cent. of the German aircraft destroyed during the Battle of Britain; how they fought across North Africa into Italy; then, later, across Normandy into Germany. Of the amazing exploits of the tiny Polish navy. "When these men come back home, as I hope that they will, I know that you will give them the heroes' welcome which they deserve—march them through the streets with bands playing and colours flying."

There are few private radio sets in Poland to-day—to get one you have to get a special licence, only issued if you are politically reliable—but loud speakers relay official programmes at street corners and other public places. I was told later of groups of people weeping and cheering as my words came through.

Since my return I have spoken to Polish troops in Britain

and Italy. Most of them were reluctant to return home. In an organised plebiscite 23,000 out of 60,000 in Britain and 13,000 out of 70,000 in Italy asked for repatriation. More will probably follow; those who wished to return had to make special request for the necessary facilities.

The difference in the numbers opting for return was significant. Of the troops in Britain, many have been recruited from Poles who were conscripted by the Germans, and who came over to our side at the first opportunity: thus most of them came from western Poland, and have homes and families awaiting them, and they have had no experience of Russian occupation. The men in Italy are largely the remnants of the Poles who came out of Russia in 1941. They came from the eastern districts, now incorporated in Russia; their homes were lost. Scarcely a man had received news of his family since 1939. Further, most of these Poles had spent two years in Russian prison camps, and did not pretend to have enjoyed the experience.

"You cannot picture it," said one man. "I was in a lumber camp in North Russia, almost in rags. You can guess the winter conditions. We were worked shockingly hard on a minimum of food. One day I said to a Russian officer who appeared friendly: 'But why do you treat us like this? In your own interests you should feed us, so that we could work properly.' He replied: 'Why should we? We have tried out the system: at the present rate you will last for about five years. Then you will be used up, but there are plenty more where you come from!' Are you surprised to find that I don't want to go back to serve the remainder of my five years?"

His story was mild compared with those of many others. Here was a deep-seated hatred, based upon national wrongs and individual persecution. Above all was the ever-present suspicion. My account of the present state of Poland was received with polite incredulity. While the Russians were there, these men could not believe in the existence of Poland.

The 13,000 volunteers in Italy were almost without exception ex-*Wehrmacht* conscripts from western Poland. Another disquieting feature was that the higher the quality of the men, the fewer opted for return. Of the magnificent Polish Air Force, only forty men out of 14,000 volunteered: of the 15,000 men of the hard-fighting Polish Armoured Division, only 100; of the Parachute Brigade, sixty applied out of 4,000. In the Polish Navy, of 3,200 men only twelve were ready to return immediately. The remainder were very emphatic in their opinions.

Yet I argued that it was vital for them to return. Some of them I could not advise: those who were strongly associated with the previous régime might find themselves classed as "war criminals,"

though they had fought gallantly while some of their accusers waited safely in Russia. They would naturally prefer the alternative suggested by Mr. Churchill, the opportunity of life in a British dominion. I believe that the others could safely return. The prospect is not pleasant: they will have to begin again. Yet an appeal to their patriotism would yield results. These are some of the finest men in Poland. Their country is in a formative state: its final shape should be settled from within, not fashioned from without. These men should play a leading part in the re-shaping of Poland. The time will come when elections will be held: they will be vital, yet will be a farce if the men who have fought the battle for Poland are not present to vote.

This raised a problem for which I pleaded urgent attention. It was anticipated that the Polish elections would be held in the autumn of 1946, and their course may be decisive. With the best will in the world, it will be quite impossible to get home all the exiled Poles: transport difficulties will forbid. Thus I suggested a postal vote, as used successfully with the British Army. True, there are endless difficulties: tens of thousands of the Polish soldiers abroad have now no constituencies. If the will is present, the difficulties can be overcome—by the creation of special and temporary constituencies for overseas voters, for example.

My suggestion of a postal ballot was not enthusiastically received. But if Polish soldiers are to be deprived of votes on the grounds that they might use them against the Government, then that Government could scarcely deserve the adjective "democratic."

In the meantime the Polish troops in western Europe, like the Russians in Poland, are outstaying their welcome. They are getting into a dangerous psychological condition—the "man without a country" seldom exercises normal responsibility. Loot and rape come easily to men who have no future.

Poles from the President downwards assured me that their kinsmen abroad would be welcomed home; the fact that I was allowed to make such an emphatic broadcast backed up their promises. Some Ministers, it is true, qualified the welcome by saying that the men must look to the new Poland, not back to the old. I can guarantee that the welcome of the mass of the Polish people would be unqualified and overwhelming. They are intensely proud of the gallant fight of their men under conditions almost unparalleled in the world's history.

I have been urging steps to dispel the suspicion which so profoundly affects the minds of the exiles. First, the immediate restoration of full postal services and the abolition of censorship. If these men had news of their homes and from their families, they would be eager to return. Second, I suggested that a hundred

of the doubters should be sent to Poland, under Allied guarantees, to see for themselves, and then brought back to tell their colleagues. All kinds of people of different interests have been trying to block these ideas.

The problem of the Polish "displaced persons" in Germany is slightly different. Some of these were deported to Germany by force; others were driven by the will to live, or bribed on the promise of good rations. There were 854,000 in the British and American zones, but the bulk of them were anxious to return home; the difficulty was the lack of transport. Eventually thousands were returned via Czechoslovakia, as the route across the Russian zone was impracticable, while British Army lorry convoys plied to Stettin. The winter may hold up repatriation, but it should be completed in the spring.

There may remain a considerable number—say, 100,000—who are unwilling to return. These may present a problem. Already they have caused a lot of trouble in Germany. Treated like dogs by the Germans, they now appreciate the reversal of fortune, and in turn treat the Germans like dogs. Their looting and licence have already lowered the Polish reputation in the eyes of the British and American forces as surely as Russian reputation has fallen in Poland. Our opinions are always coloured by things which happen to us and about us: incidents, maybe, yet more vivid to our consciousness than more important events further away.

This point is important. I have already referred more than once to Russian misbehaviour in Poland. Compared with the horrors of the German occupation, it is trivial in its material effects, yet its influence on Polish minds is very considerable. Similarly, the high reputation built up by the Poles during the hard years of war is now being undermined by the misconduct of a few thousand of their number.

The Polish Army in Britain and Italy looked like disturbing Polish-British relations in the last days of 1945. M. Osobka-Morowski, the Prime Minister, complained bitterly of the "reactionary" activities of General Anders, who consistently refused to recognise the Provisional Government, as being dominated by Russia. Morowski, obviously disappointed at the small proportion of Poles who had asked to return home, claimed that the entire control of the Polish armies should now be handed over—that is to say, that Poles should be ordered home whether they wanted to return or not.

He gave vent to some anti-British sentiments. The Polish forces had run up costs of £70 million in Britain, a large sum for Poland to repay, if asked to do so. As might be expected, he contrasted the generosity of Stalin, who had not asked Poland

for a penny. Morowski did not mention that Russia had already been amply rewarded by the acquisition of half of Poland. Every Pole in the world would sell his last possessions if a payment of £70 million would redeem Lwow and Vilno.

With his appeal for sympathetic generosity I have full agreement, but the way to achieve this is not by painting Britain as the villain against Russia's hero. Britain did stand by Poland's side while Russia was "finally" partitioning the country with Germany. Morowski was but reflecting the practice of the day, however. It is a common device—when one course is unpopular, to draw attention to another. I had recently seen it employed in Italy. There Russia became unpopular because of her suspected backing to the Yugoslav claims to Trieste, and the local Communist influence declined. To distract attention from Russia, they promptly opened a vigorous anti-British and anti-American campaign.¹

So it was in Poland, but the background of the manoeuvre was rather too obvious. Nevertheless, it should not distort our view of the scene. We owe a debt to Poland which cannot be measured in terms of £70 million; justice alone would demand a generous settlement. And we also owe an individual debt to the men who fought so gallantly by our side in the dark hours.

This problem of the exiled Poles is far graver than it seems. The Poles are excellent workers, and would make good in any dominion or colony. Yet there is a danger that their unhappy experiences would rankle and smoulder. These men might become centres of anti-Russian activity scattered throughout the world. They would be much happier at home—and most of them, disavowing any allegiance to the present government, declare that they will gladly return to a Poland ruled by *any* government legally elected.

It is nevertheless a sad commentary on our management of affairs. Here are the men who fought against German aggression from the first second of the war. Now it is won, we cannot find a method of returning them to the homes for which they fought so gallantly. The Pole who fought for Poland, and won, must now seek sanctuary in Australia!

¹ When we read of anti-British activities in Poland, we should recall that practically every newspaper is Government controlled, heavily censored, and its general policy follows a pattern set by Moscow. Thus it does not necessarily reflect the attitude of the Polish people. Nevertheless, the cumulative effects of persistent propaganda can be extensive. To-day the feeling of ordinary Poles is very friendly to Britain and the West generally.

The policy of the Provisional Government has been described as "semi-Communist," whatever that may mean. Other people call it "semi-Democratic," which is almost as equivocal.

Yet one of its moves was obvious enough. Despite the $3\frac{1}{2}$ million farms, there were still very large numbers of peasants without land of their own. So long as there were any large estates, there would be a demand that they should be broken up. In spite of the continuous fragmentation of the inter-war years, there were still many large tracts of land under individual ownership. 7,000 people owned 10 per cent. of the land.

To-day they own nothing. Their land has been broken up into peasant farms, and 380,000 people have been settled on them. This does not mean a gain in employment—the now independent peasants were once the labourers employed on the same farms.

In addition, 2,000 plots were reserved for agricultural schools, experimental establishments, and "Mutual Aid" farms.

The average extent of the new peasant holdings is 5 hectares ($12\frac{1}{2}$ acres). While I have never failed to appreciate the pride of ownership which dominates the mind of the European peasant, I wonder if he has been wise in insisting on the breaking up of the estates into small plots. The prejudice against the Russian system of collective farms is absurd, for it is not Russian at all, but has been known in eastern Europe, including Poland, for many centuries. In any case, the system does not depend upon any political -ism; it is merely an economic choice: which is the better method of organising the land?

I have argued that from the purely economic point of view the large farm is better than the small. Yet we are not concerned only with yields in cash or kind, but with the happiness of the farmers. Hitherto, given the exercise of his own free will, the peasant has always opted for his own farm. Pride has surmounted economics. An owner-farmer considered himself above the worker in a wheat factory.

The position of the peasants in the new Poland would have been difficult in any case, but the depredations of invading armies intensified every problem. Less than 20 per cent. of the livestock remained—in some villages I found only one cow to five families. On such a basis villages and towns had to be supplied with milk, butter and meat.

Most of the agricultural machinery had disappeared. While simple tools were being turned out by local craftsmen, machinery was urgently required. U.N.R.R.A. had provided 8,000 tractors, but another 20,000 were badly needed. Those available were being used co-operatively, but with so few available there were

great gaps across the country. I saw ploughs pulled by teams of horses, oxen, cows and mixed teams of both: more than once I saw two men harnessed to the plough. They had their land, and were determined to raise a harvest.

Seeds—livestock—machinery—these were the urgent needs of rural Poland. The peasant was as indestructible as ever. In the towns, workmen and clerks waited for bricklayers to come to rebuild their shattered houses: the peasants built their own.

They did not get their farms entirely free. In cash or in kind they have to pay from 1 to 2 quintals of grain per hectare for twenty years, according to the quality of the land. The average yield is about 12 quintals per hectare.

I was very greatly impressed by the way in which M. Mikolajczyk, the Minister of Agriculture, was facing present difficulties. His educational programme includes not only practical schools and colleges for young farmers, but education by radio—a complete novelty in rural Poland.

The re-settlement scheme has not been entirely satisfactory: this, indeed, was not possible. Now it is completed, there still remain two million peasants without land. I have said that agriculturally Poland is over-populated, and within the old frontiers there is simply not enough land for all, even now that the maximum holding is 125 acres, and that the population has been reduced by war.

It is a popular complaint in Poland that the new settlers are being deliberately starved of machinery and seeds so as to drive them into collective farms. I did not attach much credence to this. It was only too obvious that the necessary machinery did not exist. It may be years before every peasant has his own plough.

Another source of complaint concerned the landowner. He lost, not only his land, but his home and furniture as well: this was classed as very unfair. He was not even allowed to retain the maximum of 125 acres; he lost everything. This rule led to invidious cases. If I owned 125 acres, I kept them: if you owned 130 acres, you lost them—and your house as well. If you were destitute, you might apply for a small pension, but for practical purposes you were a pauper.

There were Polish landowners who deserved little consideration, but many others had treated their workers well. I heard more criticisms of this part of the scheme from peasants than from any other class. In some villages the late landlord was actually being supported voluntarily by the peasants who had been allocated his land. It is understood that the Communist approach to this sort of problem differs considerably from the Socialist, and the general opinion in moderate Polish circles was that the landlords had had unfair treatment. Few people queried

the break-up of the estates: this was recognised as a sudden culmination of a process which had been going on gradually for twenty years. But the method is often as important as the deed itself. "It was not Polish" was a description I frequently encountered.

The Communist approach also governed the industrial situation. Now, again, there is nothing revolutionary about State ownership of essential industries. The Post Office has been so controlled in Britain for years, and now other services have been nationalised. In many countries the railways are national property. This had always applied in Poland. Further, the State had owned or controlled many considerable enterprises; some of these had been taken over from the partitioning Powers. The rule adopted was that a monopoly applying in one part of the re-born Poland should be extended to the whole. For example, in Russian Poland the State owned the alcohol industry, but not in German or Austrian Poland: thus the monopoly of alcohol manufacture was extended to cover the whole of Poland. Apart from postal services and railways, the Polish State owned such enterprises as salt, alcohol, matches, lotteries, aviation and shipping. It controlled 70 per cent. of the iron production, 30 per cent. of the coal output, 100 per cent. of the potash industry, 20 per cent. of the oil refineries, 50 per cent. of the metal industries, with large interests in chemicals and timber. When the new Central Industrial Area was developed, most of its factories were State-owned. Many of the banks were under national control. It was estimated that the State owned 12 per cent. of all the real property in Poland.

Thus nationalisation was no revolutionary theory, but a well-established practice. It was certain to be extended when Poland took over the rest of Upper Silesia. Here were hundreds of mines and factories, taken from German owners: obviously they should become State property. This led automatically to the nationalisation of similar industries in the old Poland.

All factories employing more than fifty workers were taken over. Again there was no compensation. Often the owner was better off than the unfortunate landlord, since he was retained as factory manager: I met a large number who had accepted the situation loyally for the sake of their country.

Thus, if I were lazy and neglected my job, and so employed only forty workers, I escaped. If you were energetic and efficient and employed 400 workers—paying them wages at least as good as any State factory, and helping to solve a vital national problem in creating employment by your initiative—then you lost everything. The Communist argument is that it is a greater crime to "exploit" 400 workers than forty. Yet again it was from workers

that I heard the loudest denunciations of the scheme—not of the nationalisation, but of its form.

I agree that the State ownership was inevitable. Poland could not return to capitalism, for she had no capital—and, under present circumstances, little chance of getting it.

In Britain the trade unions have always been the main support of the State ownership campaign. In Poland, too, they had advocated the idea, but I found now a considerable confusion of thought. The unions, which in the industrial towns had achieved considerable importance; had been relegated to the Russian level, and were little more than Government appendages. Elected officials had been replaced by official nominees. Most of the union rights had been withdrawn—including the right to strike! Official speeches constantly referred to the “tightening of discipline.” There was serious concern when the Polish railway workers were actually placed under the military penal code: for practical purposes, civilian workers were subjected to military discipline. It had to be accepted, for there was no immediate method of combating it, but the idea was not popular.

Apart from the sudden and drastic programme of nationalisation, Poland presents its customary paradox. A Communist-dominated country, it had at the time of my visit far fewer controls than Britain. It needed many more; far too many people were fattening on the confusion of the moment. Some were getting far more than their share of available resources—and these folk seldom belonged to the “pampered classes.” Such a state of affairs would never be tolerated in Britain. It is neither Communistic nor democratic.

VII

In Katowice I saw a demonstration by youth organisations. I did not like it. The sight of thousands of boys and girls marching by the President was very thrilling, and their spirit was inspiring. They wore a colourful uniform: navy blue skirts or trousers, vivid deep sky-blue blouses or shirts, and red ties. I recalled exactly similar scenes years earlier in Germany and Italy—so innocent, even admirable, in appearance, yet political uniforms can be only too easily the first step down the familiar slippery slope towards totalitarianism.

(And my practical Midland blood revolted at the idea of equipping tens of thousands of husky youths and maidens with single-coloured shirts when millions of distressed Poles so badly needed shirts, colour quite immaterial.)

There were Polish flags by the thousand along the processional route, but no Russian. When I commented on this an official replied: “This is a *Polish* Socialist organisation. The Polish flag

is half red, half white. Mix them up, and you get pink. That's about our colour."

I have said, however, that the Socialist Party, once anti-Russian, is now largely under Communist control. The two sections are working closely together, but most of the Communists are anxious to emphasise that they are Poles.

"We take note of our national psychology," they explained to me. "That is why we did not push the idea of collective farms, but allowed the peasants to have their own. We shall borrow from Russia those ideas which are good, and reject those which are bad or which do not suit us. We shall never isolate ourselves from the rest of the world, like the Soviet did. We abhor censorship and suchlike restrictions. It may be too early to give freedom of propaganda, but it is not too early to give freedom of culture. Hence our desire to re-establish our old Western contacts."

I heard similar views expressed in the highest circles. The emphasis on Poles and Poland was as strong as ever it was. It is not true to say that Poland is a puppet state: a puppet cannot answer back. When the Russians suggested that a hundred Russian books should be published in Poland, the Poles assented gladly—on condition that a hundred Polish books were published in Russia.

The more things change, the more they remain the same. In the old Poland the Army was as important as the Government. In all propaganda, photographs of the President and Pilsudski (or, later, Smigly-Rydz) were displayed side by side. In every town of the new Poland I noticed exactly similar pictures of President Bierut and General Rola-Zymierski.

VIII

Yet the plain fact is that the Poles are not masters in their own house. Nor can they be while a foreign army remains on their soil, any more than the Italians can be completely independent while an Anglo-American army, however benevolent, remains in occupation.

The Russians are likely to be in Poland for many years. Their lines of communication to Germany cross the country from east to west, and there must be troops available to service them. The number would not be large, but it would represent latent power.

This situation is, however, unavoidable, and if Russia and Poland were friendly Powers it need occasion no especial concern. More potent, in the long run, may be the nature of the Russian occupation of Germany.

I discussed this point later in my journey with a Russian general.

"Last time we were going to occupy the Rhine for fifteen years, but got tired after ten," I pointed out. "I wonder if we are going to be as impatient this time?"

"You can do as you like," he replied, "but we are not thinking of occupation in terms of ten or fifteen years, but of fifty years. You may have heard that Russian is a compulsory subject in all German schools in our zone."

Unless the initial system of control in Germany is considerably improved and extended, we may contribute to a process whereby eastern Germany becomes a Russian province. In any case, for a considerable period Poland is to be virtually surrounded by Russian-controlled territory. The inference is obvious, and the Poles have not missed it. Anti-Russian they may be, but they see that they must work closely with Russia. Their mind readily absorbs such a paradox, but will the Russians understand?

The key to the political situation in Poland is the elections. They may be held in the spring or autumn of 1946; any earlier attempt would be foolish, for the task of compiling voting-lists is colossal in a population which has been continuously on the move for six years. And a balanced judgment is best obtained under fairly normal conditions of life and thought, not in the immediate aftermath of desolation and confusion.

In Government circles it was emphasised that the settlement of the country must precede a formal election. In the Oder provinces there is still a state of confusion, and the details of the constituencies have to be marked out. In addition, it is argued that all the Poles from abroad must be brought back. This by itself would delay the elections for months, but I have suggested an alternative. Indeed, if a quick election is desired and desirable, it might be on a basis of proportional representation, without territorial constituencies: these could be added later. Nobody is likely to query the method of the election so long as it is fair.

"We don't want Fascists to be elected," declared a Minister. He did not give his definition of a Fascist: in Europe to-day the word normally indicates a man who does not agree with you. There is not one chance in a thousand of Poland returning a Fascist government, but any kind of free election will return a *Polish* government.

Opponents of the régime claim that it is consolidating its authority by totalitarian methods, and that the longer the elections are delayed, the more difficult it will be to dislodge the Government, since democratic measures will be discounted, and the Government will control the force.

The argument about the elections is rapidly becoming a major issue. One section wishes to present a single list of candidates to the electors, who could do no more than approve. This would

automatically involve the continuation of the present régime. The majority of Poles demand a democratic election, by the Western definition. They do not insist on a return to full-blooded party politics. The effects of the elections in Austria and Hungary have been wide. These elections were held, as free as could be in the aftermath of war and with foreign armies in occupation: then new coalitions were formed, with members in proportion to the party candidates elected.

This method would suit the present state of Poland very well, for the condition of the country is too serious for wide political chasms. Since the Russians agreed to it in Austria and Hungary, presumably they would raise no objections in Poland. The new government would still include a few of their nominees, now backed by legitimate election.

Over and over again Poles raised the question of the elections. Were we going to support their demand for the use of democratic measures? I was greatly cheered by their intense eagerness to learn of what had been happening in the world since 1939—especially in the world of thought and learning. The first essential of democracy is access to facts.

If we have faith, we ought not to be ashamed to proclaim it abroad, where millions of people are burning to hear. In some countries democracy has as yet only shallow roots, but surely the objective should be to fertilise and strengthen them, not to drag them up.

All over Europe people have been discussing the British elections, and learning their lessons. In Italy I remarked intense interest, and was inundated with questions about one apparent trifle. The Italians understood that we had voted freely and had changed our government. Yet the casting of a vote is only one of the outward signs of democracy: a far more important basis is the acceptance of the popular will. One of the electoral subjects was the nationalisation of the Bank of England. Yet, when this was decided, the Governor, Lord Catto, did not blow up the Bank of England, as might have been expected! Instead, he agreed with a Socialist Chancellor of the Exchequer to carry on for two or three years so as to ensure the smoothest possible change-over from private to public ownership.

We expected Lord Catto to behave in this democratic fashion: we understood the action precisely. This is what other peoples want to understand. To date few of them have had a real chance, but it is quite absurd to pretend that the Poles are not fit for democratic practices. It is sometimes claimed that the peasant is not politically conscious. His outlook may be limited, but it is practical: at least he knows whether he wants to be a free farmer or a worker in a wheat factory, and he is as capable of forming a

balanced judgment on most issues as the Westerner whose sole interest lies in baseball or football pools.

I repeat that the coming elections are the key to the situation in Poland. We have not treated the Poles very well since their gallant stand in 1939: at least we must not betray them on this vital issue.

On his return from the Crimea, Mr. Churchill expressed the problem with his usual clarity. "Will the new government be properly constituted with fair representation of the Polish people? . . . Will the elections be free and unfettered? Will candidates of all democratic parties be able to present themselves to the electors and to conduct their campaigns? . . . The home of the Poles is settled. Are they to be masters in their own house? Is their sovereignty and independence to be untrammelled, or are they to become a mere protectorate of the Soviet, forced against their will to adopt the Communist or Totalitarian system?"

Mr. Churchill declared his faith in the sincerity of Russian intentions. He posed his queries to the British House of Commons, but everyone knew that they could not be answered in London or Washington, or even in Warsaw, but only in Moscow.

POLISH MISCELLANY

I

AFTER CONCENTRATING ON THE POLITICAL issue, it will add variety to my picture of the Polish scene if I wander about the country, describing and commenting upon the many topics encountered.

I went first to Cracow, which ranks among my favourite cities of Europe. It might have shared the fate of Warsaw, for the Germans had prepared to defend it street by street; innumerable concrete emplacements were still in position. But the Russian Army, by a clever manoeuvre, crossed the Vistula unexpectedly, and captured Cracow from the rear.

Thus the city was almost undamaged, save for a casual bomb here and there. The historic buildings on the Wawel received one direct hit, fortunately not serious, but the Town Church was untouched, and the *heynal* still sounds its silver notes hourly by day and night.

Cracow, indeed, had suffered less than any other city in Poland. It seemed strange to see real shops after the utter desolation of Warsaw. They were reasonably well stocked. I saw fashionable evening dresses in the windows: by the prices, however, I should estimate that they were merely for display.

I have said that the Germans made a determined attempt to exterminate Polish culture. In some countries people are afraid of the word, but without its culture a nation dies. Only Polish culture kept the national spirit alive during the long years of the partitions, and the Germans knew what they were doing when they decided to extirpate it. Fortunately, it is tenacious and its roots are deep.

Writers, artists, and professors were murdered by the hundred. Every form of Polish art was rigorously suppressed. It survived, underground. I bought one picture painted in a concentration camp: it did not portray horrors, but a simple village scene, visible through the barbed wire.

Poland had been justly proud of her cultural traditions, and especially of their sturdy growth during her twenty years of freedom. Before 1914 Polish universities were permitted only in the Austrian zone, at Cracow and Lwow. Immediately after 1919

universities were opened (or, in most cases, re-opened) at Warsaw, Vilno, Poznan and Lodz. Cultural activities were firmly supported by the Government, and the proportion of university students was higher than in England.

In literature, music and art Poland achieved high standards. The Poles drew freely, moreover, upon the arts of the world. This applied especially to literature: they published about 500 translations of foreign books annually. Further, the Poles shared the Slav aptitude for languages, and read freely in the originals, English, French, German and Russian. Their consumption of foreign books ranked near to those of Finland and Estonia, where educational standards were perhaps the highest in Europe.

Immediately after the expulsion of the Germans from Poland in 1945, the Government had the full support of its people when it decided to salvage all that survived of the deliberate wreck of Polish culture. The universities were immediately reopened. I noticed that the first ruin to be rebuilt in Warsaw was a theatre—and none of the homeless thousands thought this wrong. The first British deputation invited to visit the New Poland was of writers, not politicians.

The Government gathered all the writers, artists, musicians, poets and painters who could be traced, gave them a small subsidy and sent them to Cracow to begin the rebuilding of Poland's cultural life.

They gave our deputation a royal welcome, and there were many emotional touches in their greeting. "Now we know that the war is really over, since England has come to Poland again."

Admittedly their task is tremendous. I had been moved days previously, addressing a university group in Warsaw. I asked what I could do for them on my return—what did they need most urgently?

"Send us books—books of thought and learning. We have lived in a mental void for six years, cut off from the thought of the world. Help us to re-establish contact."

One professor had worked out a scheme for cultural reparations. He listed the terrible losses which Polish culture had suffered—the burned libraries, art treasures destroyed. He showed that this was deliberate vandalism, part of the plan to destroy Polish culture: in many instances he produced the actual German orders governing the destruction. The only books allowed in Poland were farmers' text-books, for the Germans needed Polish food. The German intelligentsia had assisted in the campaign. It was not merely that they listed works of art to be looted; in some cases they had prepared the lists long before the war began!

The professor's plan was (a) that everything which could be traced should be restored; (b) that non-German art treasures in

he Reich should be confiscated to make up deficiencies—samples of German art were not required; (c) that Germany should pay for the wanton damage done and for the rebuilding of museums and monuments.

Again it was significant that the first mention of reparations which I heard in Poland concerned cultural rather than material things.

The biggest losses, indeed, were not material, but mental. The vitality of Polish culture has been seriously weakened by the German onslaught. Countries like Britain and U.S.A. could do a good deal to help. Our deputation later arranged for the despatch of large numbers of books to Polish universities. The British Council has begun its excellent work in the stricken country. I have been urging a scheme whereby Polish professors would be brought to foreign universities to pick up the threads of their studies where they snapped so dramatically in 1939.

The Minister of Culture had explained to me his plans for reviving Polish arts. When the millions of lost books have been replaced, village libraries are to operate on a much larger scale. Although Poland had nearly abolished illiteracy, the peasant reads very little, especially in comparison with the townsman.

The Minister expounded one especially interesting idea. He proposed to appoint cultural attachés in Polish embassies and legations abroad. This seemed to me an admirable plan. Naval, military and air force attachés have lately been supplemented by commercial and Press attachés. It is high time that the importance of culture was recognised.

Polish cultural attachés would not merely interpret Polish arts in the countries concerned, but would borrow freely from them. Especially in the days of her recovery, Poland must draw heavily from foreign sources. My first caller in Cracow was a publisher: for most practical purposes he is now a Government official.

"For six years we heard only the German point of view about the war," he explained. "Will you make me out a list of fifty books explaining the British point of view? Then I will publish them."

All the traditional Polish courage will be needed. I saw libraries with empty shelves, and bookshops on heaps of rubble. I found orchestras with few instruments and little music: here, surely, cultural reparations could be drawn from Germany.

There was only one disturbing feature of the Government plans: a censorship, anathema to any artist or writer. The Minister insisted that it was purely an artistic censorship, without political basis, and he was sincere, but I was uneasy: a censorship depends more upon its exercise than on its benevolent intention. If a man is forbidden to discuss politics, there remain plenty of alternative

subjects, but a culture formalised is a culture paralysed. The very fact that a censorship existed to some extent nullified the Government plan to rescue the cultural remnants of Poland and to instal them at Cracow. When an artist accepts government pay, he is no longer free. What a writer needs is not an official subvention, but the right to speak the truth.

II

The peace of Cracow was almost startling after the fantasy of Warsaw. Save for an occasional Russian soldier in the streets and for the prices in the shops, the atmosphere was almost pre-war. Nobody was in a hurry: the restless bustle of the people of Warsaw was conspicuously absent: no voices were raised. I saw horses with slats of rubber nailed across their shoes, so that they made the minimum of noise as they plodded along the settled streets.

The people of Cracow had experienced the horrors of a German occupation, and every family had someone to mourn. I doubt if many realised the greater sufferings of their brothers in Warsaw. Adversity can seldom be shared in equal sections, and some portions of Poland are much better off than others.

This could lead to a difficult situation. It is aggravated by a lack of news, for which rumour inevitably deputises. The provinces know little about each other's war experiences and hopes of peace, and there is a real danger of divided opinion. Given an opportunity, the Poles are only too ready to blame the Russians, and it was freely believed that Russia wanted a divided Poland, as being easier to conquer. The real explanation is probably the appalling condition of transport, which makes it impossible for more than a trickle of people to pass from one region to another. Another reason is the failure of the Government newspapers. Because they are virtually Communist organs, their very unanimity naturally arouses suspicions among the Poles.

The dangers of disunity could become very real, for they are not entirely new. They became obvious immediately after the re-birth of Poland in 1918. We have noted that the Poles who had lived under the Austrians were democratic in outlook: they had enjoyed a reasonable measure of self-government; they held law in respect. Those under the Germans were disciplined and nationalistic: their social experience was commercial rather than administrative. The Poles from the Russian zone were conspirators: for nearly a century and a half they had resisted aggression, and inevitably they tended to be suspicious of all governments.

Thus the early years of freedom saw many possibilities for regional animosities. The only Polish universities and self-

governing institutions were in Austrian Poland, so that it was natural that this region should supply the bulk of the administrators—to arouse the jealousy of the other areas. Political cleavage added to the strained atmosphere. Each political party had developed separately in the three zones, and a Socialist in Russia was not quite the same thing as a Socialist in Germany. This local outlook accounted in part for the large numbers of political factions which entered the first Polish parliaments.

Only time and continuous intermingling could still such doubts and animosities. As Poland settled down, people began to move about, and ideas became clarified. It is largely to the credit of Pilsudski that he succeeded in exterminating the last remnants of regional jealousies.

The Poles must be careful to ensure that these are not allowed to revive. Even in England there has been some feeling between the man who suffered the war in London and the man who escaped its worst effects in a distant county. The possibilities of cleavage are much greater in Poland, where the range of hardship has been so much wider. The new western territories, with their economic possibilities, could add to the potential difficulties.

Political differences do not ease the situation. I heard complaints in Warsaw that all the dispossessed landlords had fled to Cracow, which had become a reactionary centre, unprepared to share the forward march of the new Poland. It is quite true that the atmosphere of Cracow is not Communist, but its conservative tendency may have a healthy influence upon Polish thought. Warsaw admits that its people have been made abnormal by their bitter experiences: they might be tempted to plunge into experiments later, only to regret them. A devastated hulk of a city is not necessarily a better background for thought than a centre which for centuries has studied the wisdom of the ages. The ideal is to harness the potentialities and qualities of both, not to set one against the other.

There are those who would very much like to see Poland divided within itself—the Germans certainly would; yet no country needs unity more. Her task is going to be difficult enough in ensuring political co-ordination, without the disturbing effects of provincial diversities.

III

Common suffering often binds interests. Many Poles who once held mild anti-Semitic views are now full of sympathy for the Jewish survivors of one of the most appalling tragedies in history.

Yet long-standing prejudices die very hard. In several parts of Poland I encountered familiar accusations: fantastic stories about

Jewish mutilation of Christian children which might have issued direct from a German propaganda machine, and maybe did.

Although—or perhaps because—the Polish Communists include a proportion of Jews, the accusations of Jewish exploitation of Polish interests were common, though more restrained than previously. And in Cracow I saw the aftermath of an anti-Jewish riot.

It was a typical example of mob hysteria. A Polish boy ran from the direction of a synagogue shouting that the Jews had hurt him. Immediately a gang of young men, mostly students, rushed to the scene. In such an atmosphere, only a casual incident is necessary to cause trouble, and a single stone-throw provided the occasion. In the subsequent affray one Jewess was killed and dozens of people were injured.

A professor and an Army officer who helped to calm the mob both told me that there were Germans among the crowd—there are still families of “good” Germans in the district. This is not a sufficient explanation. More plausible is the abnormality of mind which is the legacy of suffering, yet even this is not sufficient.

It is not merely a question of Christian gullibility to malicious rumour about the Jews; the converse is active. In Germany I met Jews who had fled in terror from Poland. After surviving the horrors of German concentration camps, they now complained that they had been terrorised by members of the Polish Home Army.

It is quite true that some members of the surviving groups of this organisation hold anti-Semitic views; it is equally true that bandit elements are ready to seize any pretext for robbing the Jews. Yet some of the stories were fantastic—revived Mediæval legends, with modern settings, of Jews being ceremonially beheaded by Polish factions. The fact is that the abnormal atmosphere of Poland distorts judgment, and every incident becomes grossly exaggerated.

(There are some Jews who have made a terrorised exit from Poland in the hope that their fate will inspire practical sympathy in the form of permission to enter Palestine.)

The problem of the Jews in Poland is now more urgent than ever. Their numbers have been so reduced that they could easily be absorbed in the Polish population—if they so wish. I have recorded, however, that the horrors of the massacre have made Poland a place of sadness and terror to the surviving Jews: practically every one I met had only one thought—to get out of a land which was haunted with such bitter memories.

In October, 1945, we were startled to read that the Russians were sending Army units back into all Polish provinces to deal with "bandits." Until that time, apparently, it had been assumed that the war was over.

There are plenty of "bandits" in Poland. I met quite a number of them myself, and attended the funerals of several of their victims.

I traced four categories of outlaws; there may be more. We have seen that the Polish Home Army—commonly known as the A.K. (*Armia Krajowa*)—carried on a partisan war against Germany throughout the whole of the occupation. Generally, partisan activity was grossly over-publicised during the war, but the Germans have admitted that the Poles were more than a nuisance. The attacks of the Home Army were stimulated by the terror of the German revenge.

The Russian policy differed somewhat from ours. We welcomed and supported anyone who would fight against our enemies: we did not ask if the fighters were Communists or Conservatives. The Russians, looking ahead, wished to control directly all forces near their zone of action. Hence agents were dropped by parachute in Poland to raise a "People's Army" under Communist control. They were not very successful, for most active Poles were already enrolled in the Home Army. This was directed by the *émigré* Government in London, which, as we have seen, was obnoxious to the Russians.

When the Soviet armies entered Polish territory, there were moments of doubt. Did they come as liberators or conquerors? The London Government ordered the Home Army to co-operate, and the partisans on many occasions gave active and valuable assistance to the Red Army. Nevertheless, the Russians did not pretend to trust them, since they accepted the authority of the *émigré* Government and not that of the Russian-imposed Communist Committee. Thus, as the Germans were driven back, the Polish Home Army was disarmed. Some of its officers disappeared, and have not since been heard of.

The Poles, burning to strike a blow at the hated Germans, could not understand this attitude. The attempt to impose a Communist Government added to their suspicions, and the arrest and exile of their officers confirmed them. Thousands believed that their own safety was involved, and took to the forests.

Here, in time, they became a nuisance to the local population as well as to the Russians, for they raided to supply themselves with food. Eventually the Provisional Government made a liberal offer: a complete amnesty to all who gave up their arms,

and Service pensions for the widows of all Home Army men who had been killed. Their confidence restored by the return of Mikolajczyk and his colleagues to Poland, the majority of the partisans accepted the offer and returned to their homes.

Others, however, did not: one estimate of their numbers was 20,000. They did not pretend to trust the Provisional Government or its Russian sponsors. They believed that they were fighting for Poland, as their grandfathers had fought years earlier. From their forest hide-outs they raided jails and concentration camps to release political prisoners; we have already encountered some of them.

The remnants of the Home Army were true guerrillas, moving lightly from place to place, seldom in large numbers. When I met some of their members I found them misguided, but sincere. They were convinced that the Russian object was the complete conquest of Poland, and against this they would fight to the death, and by all methods. Their determination was intense, and they are unlikely to be deterred by punitive methods. I fear that we are destined to hear more of them. They are dangerous, not merely because of their terrorist methods, but because all anti-Government activity can be linked with them by suitable propaganda. Already it is alleged in official circles that they are supported and armed by "reactionary" Polish groups abroad—General Anders, the Polish Commander in Italy, was openly accused of being the real head of the organisation—but how the arms are conveyed to the Polish forests is not specified. For many of their ideas the remnants of the Home Army can find ample support among the Polish people, but their activities are likely to alienate the sympathies of men and women who have already suffered too much of war, and who long for peace in their own land.

The second category is more worthy of the appellation of "bandits." Every fighting group attracts to itself elements of the gangster type, with which every country is amply supplied. Some of these fought well against the Germans, but remained under arms for their own purposes, robbing their own people as well as Army supply columns.

The third was perhaps the smallest, but potentially the most dangerous. It was composed of *Volksdeutsch*. There were three-quarters of a million Germans in Poland in 1939, and most of them had acted as Fifth Columnists. Since then, hundreds of thousands of others had been planted in Polish homes. Most of them fled before the Red Army advance, for it was obvious that Poland held no future for them. Others left it too late. Then, sometimes joined by stragglers from the German Army, they took to the woods.

They have kept up the fight without scruples: they have the

despair of cornered beasts. There can be no terms for them—the list of their crimes puts them beyond the law—and they are desperate men. Cunning, too, for they are adroit in setting Poles and Russians against each other. In such times of confusion it is not difficult to arrange that the blame for an outrage falls on the wrong shoulders.

Formidable though this triple if non-co-ordinated body of partisans was, it could have been dealt with by the Polish Army, rapidly growing in strength. The coming of the severe winter would have made life in the open forests difficult if not impossible, and my own impression was that Poland would soon see the last of its "bandits," patriotic or professional. The fourth category, however, was a more formidable proposition, for it consisted of Russian deserters—coupled, in some instances, with Russian "displaced persons" from Germany who believed that they were compromised and who were afraid to return home.

It is this section of the "men of the forest" who were primarily responsible for the reoccupation of Poland by Russian forces. The Polish "People's Militia," hastily organised and poorly staffed, was reluctant to tackle the job. Marshal Rokossovsky gave it full authority: its members could shoot, and no questions would be asked. Yet such is the power of the Soviet that Polish militiamen hesitated to shoot Russians, even though those Russians were outside the law.

The Polish Army, however, was quite competent to deal with the situation. It was still largely under Russian control, and had no direct voice in the matter. The rank and file do not pretend to like the system of officering, mostly by Russians or at best Russian-born Poles; they do not react favourably to the political activities which pervade the barracks. Naturally, they want a truly Polish Army. As an additional injury to its pride, most of the modern equipment issued to it during the war has been withdrawn by the Russians, and second-class captured weapons substituted. They are, however, quite adequate for the rounding up of lightly-armed bandits.

The partisan activities were actually on the decline, and the situation was getting in hand. Thus there were not wanting Poles who connected the dramatic Russian decision to send armies back into Poland with the failure of the Five Power Conference of Foreign Ministers in London the previous week.

We shall soon know if this suspicion is well-founded. The Russians have set up special authorities, with a new code of punishments, to deal with their deserters, and can be relied upon to apply them efficiently. If the Russian purpose were indeed to deal with bandits, then their armies will be withdrawn from Poland before this book appears.

The people who were most disquieted at the Russian incursion were the peasants. The custom of living on the country is very disturbing to peasant economy, which never enjoys a wide margin of plenty.

I went out into the villages alone. Complaints about Russian looting became monotonous. However, it was reasonable to hope that they represented only a passing phase. I was more interested to study the effects of the land-reform scheme.

Peasants never react favourably to discipline, economic or otherwise. I found men who had achieved the ambition of a lifetime, the ownership of their own land, yet were now thinking out schemes to cheat the State which had made this possible.

I have explained that the peasant installed on a farm has to give a moderate proportion of his crops to the State as a form of rent-purchase. In addition, 25 per cent. of all produce must be sold to the Government at fixed prices, which are low. It is on the basis of this produce that the basic ration to the people in the towns is issued.

The remainder of the farm produce may be disposed of in the open market, where it realises eight to ten times the Government price. The temptation is obvious. The peasant sometimes tries to evade the Government quota so as to have the more to sell in the free market.

In this he is not merely anti-social, but very ill-advised. There were many Communists who wished to establish collective farms at once, but bowed to the obvious and overwhelming wishes of the peasants. Yet if the urban workers are not supplied with food, drastic action may have to be taken. Even in Government circles in Warsaw I heard the peasants described as *kulaks*—an ominous name. The Poles would do well to read the history of the Russian Revolution: how the peasants attempted to defy the Government, and how they themselves were the ones to starve. Among the men in power are at least a few of the same temper as the Bolsheviks of 1920; they are not likely to see their favoured schemes sabotaged by the obstinacy of their own peasants.

It is not true that all the dispossessed landlords have taken refuge in Cracow, but some of them have settled there. Most of them were disgruntled, and I could scarcely blame them. They had anticipated the loss of their land, for the tendency in that direction had long been obvious. They were, however, bitter at the total absence of compensation, and at the confiscation of their homes and personal possessions. In this I think that their grievance was justified.

A Polish official gave an explanation: "You must understand

that this was not an economic reform—it was political. We had not merely to relieve the magnate of his land; we had to curb his influence. He is generally much cleverer than the peasant. If he were allowed to stay in his manor house, he would still have a wide influence in his village: the effects of tradition are not broken in a day. So he was ordered to get right out.

“Later, if he so wishes, he may apply for a farm in another part of the country, and become a peasant himself.

“Some of the landlords have behaved very well. They are good agriculturalists, and are helping in the management of the new experimental farms. The others must change their ideas.”

In the meantime they may starve. I met some who were utterly destitute. Others were living on the charity of their own peasants. Nowhere did I hear stronger criticism of the total expropriation than in the villages, where peasants in the exuberant joy of ownership found time to remember the misery of the man who had employed them for half a lifetime.

“It will have to be altered,” they said. “We are Poles, not Russians.”

VI

Katowice is like Sheffield, but cleaner. It is purely industrial, and its aspect is utilitarian rather than æsthetic. The country round about is a gentle downland, which to the south merges into the hills and mountains of Sudetenland.

Here again the war damage was comparatively slight. The people appeared to be far better fed and clothed than those of Warsaw—the Germans had needed the coal of Upper Silesia, so had treated the people more gently than the partisans of Warsaw. Again I reflected that no country has yet thought out a method of sharing out the miseries and sufferings of war. It may be impossible to achieve; nothing can compensate for the loss of a loved one. Yet a woman who has lost a husband but retained her home is a degree more fortunate than the woman who has lost husband and all. And in every population, a proportion escapes almost unscathed. Very often, the slighter the impact of personal suffering, the less sympathy is felt with the miseries of others. In this part of Poland I found few who really appreciated the tragedy of Warsaw.

About 70 per cent. of the industrial establishments were working again. I encountered the usual complaints of removal of machinery by the Russians, and went out to see for myself. Some were exaggerated, others well-founded.

“We tried to stop them, but they would not listen to us,” a workman explained. “They said that the Germans expanded our works during the occupation, so that the machinery was war

booty. But they did not take away only the machinery which the Germans had installed; they took ours as well.

"It broke my heart to see how they did it. They just hacked machines away from the concrete foundations—by the time the machinery was in Russia, it would be scrap iron. What's the sense of that? Come and see for yourself."

I am no mechanic, but the battered remnants of machinery did not suggest an ordered removal. Dismantling machinery is an expert job, and most of the Russian engineers were very busy, so that the task was allotted to pioneers. Later I saw many train loads of machinery on their way to Russia. Some were admirably cared for: others deserved all the criticism of the Polish workman. Sometimes the culpability was glaring. I saw truck loads of adding machines looted from Germany. They were loosely stacked in open trucks—and it was raining hard. By the time they reached Russia they would be worthless.

The workers were full of complaints about their living conditions, but these were inevitable. The urban worker is seldom very far-sighted, and I have explained that the Government's bold policy of freezing wages while lowering prices involved many hardships. Indeed, no system could avoid hardship in a country so stricken as Poland.

In Katowice I met a man wearing a brown drill coat. He grinned cheerfully as he reintroduced himself.

"We met years ago," he reminded me. "Oh, I don't wonder that you didn't recognise me. Our last meeting was at a governor's reception, and I was in evening dress!

"I owned a factory here. It was nationalised, of course, and I got no compensation at all. However, they did give me a job at my own factory, which keeps me alive. What more can a man ask after more than five years of German occupation?

"Yes, it has been tough going. Mind you, although I don't profess to agree with the Government on many things, I do appreciate the immensity of their task. The Germans had printed zloty notes by the million million; they were worthless. So the Government called them in, and issued new ones. No person could have more than 500 zloty in the new currency. You know what that means in purchasing power."

I did: about £1.

"All bank deposits were frozen. That is, private fortunes disappeared. I was a rich man one day, almost a pauper the next.

"However, I'm not as badly off as my cousin. He owned an estate and was a good farmer. He has lost everything, even his house, and I've had to take in his family. For at least they have left me my house, and by selling its contents bit by bit we manage to keep alive. I can't grumble over-much. I'm far better off than

thousands of others. And I like my job at the factory. I always did. My new boss is a Communist, but he's a very sensible man. He doesn't know the first thing about metals, and admits it, so he takes the manager's salary, but allows me to do the job. Maybe I'm happier than he is."

I met a mine manager in Katowice who declared himself highly content.

"Of course, our economic plight is appalling, but we're all in it," he explained. "But these Communists are very tolerant to their technicians. We are all kept on at our old jobs—we should be glad to do them in any case, for the sake of Poland—but they give us a fair share of whatever is going. I have Grade 1 rations, plus occasional U.N.R.R.A. supplies. This means a lot more than money in Poland to-day.

"And now I am really manager of the mine. You know that the usual clashes had begun with trade unions before the war. I gather that you had the same sort of thing in England. Well, now it is illegal to strike! The men have to do as they are told—and they don't like it. I have such power as a Communist technician as I never had when I was a capitalist. I must be careful; it is going to my head. Already I begin to fancy myself as a Commissar. Soon I shall be a dictator!"

I found that he was right: the miners were not so happy. Actually, they were not worrying unduly over political considerations, but over the more practical difficulty of doing heavy work on meagre rations and low wages. I put the Government viewpoint to them, emphasising the fight against inflation. My remarks were not very effective. These men did not pretend to take the long view, and looked at to-day much more interestedly than at to-morrow.

I have pointed out that Russia's policy of self-sufficiency shut out Poland's trade, and forced her to seek new markets. Now the policy is being reversed.

In Warsaw I had asked: "Why don't you get half a million German prisoners to start clearing away the rubble?"

"We should like them, and we know how to make them work! But the Russians claimed all the prisoners taken by the Polish army in the east. So we haven't any. However, we've just done a deal. We're going to give the Russians 4 million tons of coal in exchange for 45,000 German prisoners."

The bargain was hard, and I encountered many others. Russia will almost dominate Polish industry. The official estimate of coal production for 1946 is 50 million tons, which is probably too high. Of this, one-half is designated for export—15 million tons of it for Russia. The terms are severe, and the price paid will cover little more than the cost of production.

Russia has, moreover, claimed a large proportion of Poland's textile output. Of the estimated production of 75 million yards in 1946, Russia is to have 45 million. The traffic is, of course, not one-way. Russia is delivering raw materials to Poland—iron and manganese ores, raw cotton, and hides. These are a great boon to Poland, for the critical lack of shipping implies that such essential things could not be obtained from elsewhere for months to come.

Ample trade between Poland and Russia would be highly advantageous to both parties. But many Poles are hoping that future terms will not be quite so onerous.

VII

I have commented on Poland's inheritance of four legal systems on her re-emergence in 1918. The unification of the laws had not been completed by 1939. In German Poland, for example, a civil marriage was legal: in the other areas the religious ceremony prevailed. This usage persisted: to amend it would appear to make all previous marriages in north-west Poland illegal!

Now the issue was raised again, in a strange form. In September, 1945, the Government announced its intention of disclaiming religious marriages in all parts of Poland. A couple can have a religious ceremony, but their actual marriage is a civil affair. This sounds innocuous enough; it merely lines up Polish usage with that of dozens of other countries. Yet it occasioned great excitement: everybody recognised it, not as a minor domestic detail, but as the first serious and inevitable clash between the Government and the Roman Catholic Church.

In many ways the standing of the Church is as high as ever. The priests shared the melancholy lot of their flocks. Indeed, as some of the natural leaders of a peasant community, they were often the first to suffer. In Russian-occupied Poland the proportion of clergy forcibly exiled was higher than that of any other class. They suffered their share, and more, of the German assault on Polish culture.

There was one untoward note. Early in the war the Pope approved the extension of the ecclesiastical administration area of the Bishop of Danzig. Though it covered only spiritual charge, it was interpreted as a condonation of the German incorporation of north-west Poland into the Reich, and was resented accordingly.

If the Government intends to challenge the power of the Church, then the battle will be long and arduous. The influence of the parish priest is still very considerable. In Cracow I went round to early morning Mass at five churches, and found them

crowded. On a Sunday morning I borrowed a bicycle and rode round the villages: the churches were as full as in pre-war days.

I talked with parishioners and their priests. They had retained the old suspicions of Communists and their anti-God propaganda. The new status of the Orthodox Church in Russia was regarded as a political manoeuvre, designed not merely to pacify the millions of Russians who still hold to their ancient faith, but to attract Orthodox believers in neighbouring countries.

Priests told me that they had anticipated a Government onslaught, since the Communist antipathy to religion was well-known, and were prepared to resist it. The civil marriages dispute was only a pretext—a clever choice by the Government, I thought, since on the surface the issue was very debatable. This was not the first time the Catholic Church in Poland had been opposed, but it had always survived because it was firmly founded in the hearts of the people. So it was argued to me. The Polish Government may have to tread warily. Power may be intoxicating, but when it depends upon the backing of foreign force, it is illusory. History records many examples where faith has conquered bayonets—quite a number in Poland.

The next stage of the battle may be fiercer. The Church owns large estates, and in the first violent expropriation they were exempted. Banking on the land-hunger of the millions of landless peasants, the Government may attempt to seize the Church property: then the struggle will be fierce, and not all the peasants will be behind the Government. In rural areas much superstition survives, and many a man would be chary of accepting a farm “stolen” from the holy Church.

In Government circles I heard many denunciations of the Catholic Church as “reactionary,” which in this case means anti-Communist. I had to remind some ardent friends of the old adage: “The Church is an anvil which has shattered many hammers.”

VIII

Casual conversations.

A Pole at Bielce: “I was a member of the A.K. (Home Army). When I was taken prisoner by the Russians, I was put in a cattle truck with *Germans*—the men I had been fighting for nearly six years!”

* * *

A peasant woman: “A British aeroplane crashed near our village, and its crew were killed. We buried them, and the priest conducted the service. All the village was there. Our men burned or buried the wreck of the aeroplane, and erected a haystack

over the parts they could not dispose of. The children placed flowers every day on the graves. *And the Germans never knew anything about the aeroplane's coming down!*

"Last week a British officer came from Warsaw and we gave him the identity tags of the dead airmen. He thanked us very much, but it was nothing. If the airmen had been alive, we would have hidden them—for years, if need be."

* * *

A Lawyer: "The principal trouble in Poland to-day is that nobody knows what is legal and what isn't. We have our pre-1939 code of law. Then the Germans made their own regulations, which were cancelled by the Russians, who imposed their own. Now the present Government issues decrees at an impossible rate. Since nobody knows whether the Government is really legal or not, people only take notice of them when they are forced to do so, or if they want to. We need a legal clean-up very badly. A citizen can break the law a hundred times a day and never know it until the police haul him in."

* * *

A Minister in Warsaw: "I do not agree with the idea of using German prisoners here. Warsaw is the heart of Poland. It should be rebuilt by Poles."

* * *

Val Gielgud: "I do not think that the Poles are being romantically optimistic when they assure us that they now have food. To-day in Cracow I saw a sack of potatoes fall off a dray. It burst. In many countries this would almost have started a riot, as people fought for the potatoes. Here the dray-driver scarcely bothered to pick them up, pushing most of them into the gutter."

* * *

A Government official at Cracow: "Don't take this city as being typical of the new Poland. Cracow and Lublin have been stationary while the rest of Poland has been on the move for six years. It is still moving. It doesn't quite know where it is going, but it is on its way. This is the result of enemy occupation: it destroys all thought of security. Thus, when freedom does return, you can scarcely believe it or use it."

* * *

An American U.N.R.R.A. officer: "Yes, we've done a pretty good job here, I think. The Poles complain that too big a share of our supplies falls into Russian hands, and there's some basis

for that. But the biggest danger, as I see it, is this: that the more we put into Poland, the more the Russians take out.

"Poland is like a bath. U.N.R.R.A. is pouring in water, and the Russians are running it off. I should say that the level is slowly falling.

"I'm worried about what will happen when the folks at home get to know. The American people are glad to pay out dollars for the relief of Poland, but they aren't prepared to provide loot for Russian soldiers."

* * *

An engine-driver: "I was in Lwow when the Russians arrived there in 1939. It was amazing. My brother kept a shop, and he had sold out within two days. The Russians bought watches, jewellery and perfume as if they had never seen them before. They had plenty of paper money, ready printed, and paid any prices: but, of course, the paper money eventually became worthless. My brother has lost everything now, anyway, including his shop.

"I was a trade-union organiser, and I thought that I knew a little about propaganda. The Russians taught me a lot. You may have heard of their device in the schools? The teacher would say: 'Pray to your God for bread'; the children would pray, and nothing happened. Then the teacher would say: 'Now pray to Stalin for bread.' The children did—and immediately somebody appeared with a basket of loaves.

"As a good Socialist, I tried hard to get on with the Russians. Individually, it was quite easy. With a couple of Russian soldiers in my house, and a bottle of vodka, we all had a good time. But the moment I got up against the machine! Eventually I got away to the German sector. The life was hard, but I preferred it. I have come to the conclusion that when Poles and Russians talk about Socialism, they don't mean the same thing.

"It is quite certain that they don't mean the same thing when they talk about freedom. A Russian says that he's free because he hasn't got a capitalistic boss, though a commissar seemed like a foreman to me. A Pole thinks he's free when his country is cleared of foreign invaders. I've had a lot of trouble persuading the Russians about that. Even now I doubt if they understand."

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An office building in Warsaw, sixteen stories high, was almost of skyscraper dimensions. The Polish word was "cloudscratcher."

* * *

"The key to Polish recovery is production. The war has pauperised Poland, but not starved her. We have food, but lack

clothes, homes and furniture. We are struggling our way back to normal life. We really need outside help, but the world is so topsy-turvy that we may have to depend on ourselves. Thus prosperity may lie a long way round the corner, but we *shall* reach it. We think comparatively in everything: we are better off to-day than we were a year ago. We are happy just to be alive."

* * *

The Poles are keen students of the sciences as well as of the arts. On the ruins of Warsaw I noticed affixed posters advertising a series of lectures by a learned professor: subject—the Atomic Bomb!

* * *

There is drama in every corner of Poland. Every man or woman has a story, often intense and moving. The great tragedy of the land has been the breaking up of families. Poland to-day consists of 10 million people searching for 10 million others.

I was overwhelmed with appeals from people to trace their sons, somewhere with the Polish forces. Conversely, Polish acquaintances in Britain pleaded with me to trace their parents. Often I failed, but my first endeavour was dramatically successful.

Even as I was boarding the aeroplane at Hendon a young man dashed up. He mentioned the name of a mutual friend as introduction. Then proffered his request: would I try to find his mother? He had last heard of her four years earlier. She was working in the Red Cross at Warsaw: she did not know that he was alive.

That same evening I walked round to the Red Cross at Warsaw. By an unusually happy chance, the lady was still working there. Imagine the concentrated drama when, after a gap of four years, a strange Englishman appeared to say, "I saw your son in London this morning."

* * *

"Of all the Russian troops to come here, the Ukrainians were the most civilised. They were never so wild in their looting or in their revenge on the Germans as the rest of the Russians.

"One thing surprised us, in view of the propaganda we had read—the gap between officers and men in the Russian Army. It was far wider than in the German.

"Perhaps there was reason for it. The Russian officer was generally far better educated than his men, whose standard was often very low. This alone involves a gap: it was widened by the strictness of military discipline."

"There was a time when Poland expected too much of Britain and America. Now she expects too little."

* * *

An American soldier: "There was a big medical store just outside Warsaw, with an American guard. The Russians saw us off duty, and apparently decided that we were slack: so one night they raided us, and discovered that we weren't!

"Our officer complained to the Russian High Command. They said that the raiders must have been Poles. But we had taken the precaution of capturing some Russian prisoners.

"I'm looking forward to seeing what *Pravda* makes of the incident. Probably we shall learn that the Russians were going about their own business peaceably when a vicious gang of Americans set upon them! It's difficult being Allies, isn't it?"

* * *

The birds are returning only slowly to some areas of Poland—the farmers miss them badly, but five years of battle frightened them away. But one day in Warsaw I rubbed my eyes as I saw half a dozen yellow birds perched on a heap of rubble. I found that, as the battle approached, people had released their canaries—but the birds had not taken flight, but remained tame, clinging closely to the ruins of their old homes.

* * *

A professor at Cracow: "The peasant is very important, but too much should not be made of his numerical preponderance. In Poland the intelligentsia and industrial workers are more influential than they are in Hungary, for example."

* * *

Another professor, at Lodz: "The Poles are never seen at their best in times of prosperity or success, but in dark days they rank with any people in the world. To-day we are better off because we are worse off."

* * *

A Cracow resident: "I must say that the Russians have behaved very well here. There has been very little trouble—only the casual incidents you expect with any occupying army."

When I passed on this compliment to a Russian officer, he said: "Maybe the atmosphere of the place has affected us. We are susceptible to atmosphere, and Cracow has such a dignity and charm."

He added: "I am very glad to talk with you. I was in Berlin for a few weeks, but we were forbidden to fraternise with the British and Americans. I was disappointed. I wanted to get to know them. But orders are orders."

* * *

A lawyer: "There can be no real co-operation between East and West in Europe until we have arrived at an agreed definition of the word 'democracy.'"

* * *

A Communist in Katowice: "We are trying to counter Russian imperialism with Polish Communism."

* * *

An Army officer: "One thing is well worth remembering—that the number of Poles killed in massacres far exceeds the number killed in battle. This fact exercises strange psychological effects."

* * *

A professor: "Our people and yours must stick to principles. If we try to play at power politics, Russia is bound to win."

* * *

"Even allowing for present economic difficulties, the basis of reward in Poland is distorted. It may be wrong to pay a professor three times as much as a plumber, but it is certainly wrong to pay a plumber three times as much as a professor."

* * *

The more resilient peasant is not as dependent on official schemes as the town worker. This applies especially to housing—the peasant builds his own.

I suggested building a temporary city of peasant houses outside Warsaw, to house the population while the city proper was being rebuilt.

* * *

A Polish Liberal: "There is far too much talk about the 'unbridgeable gulf' between Poland and Russia. The fact is that there is no real conflict of interests. We are both determined to guard ourselves against further German aggression; economically, we are complementary rather than rivals. Both have everything to gain from peace, everything to lose by strife. There is no obstacle to honest co-operation—indeed, there is every reason for

it, always provided that the Russians do not interfere with our freedom. If they attempt this, everything else becomes of secondary importance."

* * *

A schoolmaster: "We believe that the future of Poland depends upon agreement among the Great Powers. If Russian suspicions are allayed, then we have nothing to fear.

"We are nervous, too, about Germany. Some people seem to assume that the present impotence of Germany is permanent, but that is not true. It is not even the Russian idea—you remember that Stalin always talked about 'Hitlerite Germany' as the enemy, not the Germans. We don't agree with him there; we saw too much of the Germans!

"The Russians are not conventional. Suppose they made a new pact with Germany, as they did at Rapallo in 1922, or as they did in 1939. They could offer such terms as would rally all Germans to them, and the British and American armies of occupation would have a very uncomfortable time. Alternatively, the British and Americans could attempt to use Germany against Russia. We don't want to see either of these things happen—in either case, Poland loses!"

* * *

A miner, a trade-union leader who had been supplanted from his post by a Communist: "The present régime is determined to preserve its power at all costs. Don't be surprised if a big political trial is staged. 'Evidence' will be 'discovered' that leading non-Communists collaborated with the Germans. Actually they fought the Germans while the Communists had good jobs in Moscow, but truth is the first casualty in battle.

"Don't be surprised, too, if Poland experiences a wave of political murders. They will be blamed on the 'Fascists,' of course, but my prophecy is that the men most obnoxious to the Communists will be the first to die. You see the idea? People will be wild, and the Communists will seize the opportunity for a wholesale purge of 'Fascists'—that is, potential opponents."

Since then, two leading members of the Polish Peasant Party have been assassinated. I hope that the other forecasts of the trade unionist will not materialise.

* * *

In Warsaw I met by chance an old acquaintance.

"So you are alive!" I cried. This is the conventional greeting in Poland.

"Yes. Just."

"What has happened to you?"

If you stop any man or woman in Warsaw and ask that question, you will get a story far more dramatic than anything I ever put into a book.

"The Germans got me," he said. "They sent me to the concentration camp at Maideneck. When I saw the horrors about me, I thought: 'It is not worth while trying to live. I will fling up my hands and die.' Then I thought: 'No, I will not die; I will live, to fight this evil for the rest of my days.'

"So I lived. They broke my body, but they could not break my spirit. The jobs they gave me: once I was employed on handing Polish children into gas chambers. But I survived, and now I will fight this evil for the rest of my days. What a task we face—to make the air of Europe fit for a free man to breathe!"

* * *

A Polish soldier: "I was captured by the Germans in Italy, got away when they collapsed, and am now in the Polish Army again—in Poland. It worries me—and makes me mad—when I hear some of our bosses talking about General Anders as a Fascist. After all, he was fighting the Fascists while these people were sitting pretty in Moscow. I fought at Tobruk and Cassino. I suppose that is Fascist?"

* * *

A peasant: "The bravest man in Poland is Archbishop Sapieha. He is not a politician, but he stood up to the Germans firmly. He knew how to affect their minds. Once he invited the *Gauleiter*, Franck, to a banquet. He gave him unsweetened coffee made of acorns and dry black bread. Those were the Polish rations, and that was all Franck got."

* * *

The wife of a professor at Lodz: "It is not so bad to have lost everything. We feel so free."

Light relief.

Cracow is famous for its sausages, which are highly seasoned and flavoured, and very delicious. Later, when I caught up with Val Gielgud and David Thomson in Warsaw, I accused them of murdering a baby and concealing the body in their room for an inordinate period. Then I found that the odour came from a pound of Cracow sausage, which they were taking to a friend in England.

* * *

A room of one's own is impracticable in devastated Poland, and I found many strange resting places and interesting bed-fellows. Once I shared a room with a famous Polish poet. He never quite got used to my habit of getting up with the dawn.

"Why do you get up so early?" he demanded when inadvertently I dropped a shoe and wakened him at 5 a.m.

"I want to go out into the streets and meet people," I said. "Time is too precious for sleep."

"Ah!" he murmured. "I must remember that: 'Time is too precious for sleep.' I shall write a poem on it."

But then he promptly turned over and went to sleep again, and I never saw his poem.

* * *

For many nights running I shared rooms with Polish artists, writers and poets. Without exception they were charming companions and delightful conversationalists: and without exception they snored furiously and inartistically.

* * *

A Polish lady took me to Government House at Katowice. As we walked up a wide flight of stone steps she remarked: "This is the capital come-in." I had to do my own interpretation before I realised that she meant the principal entrance.

* * *

In Cracow I saw the Polish ballet. It ought to tour the world. Its choreographic representations of the lovely old folk tales of Poland would electrify a London audience. The comedy was especially delightful.

Later I met some of the dancers at a party. We played what

was to me a new game—ballet charades. Although I maintained that I was the world's worst dancer, they insisted that I should take part. The character allocated to me was: an old peasant, going to the kitchen to find out why his dinner is not ready, discovered that his young wife has run off with his son, so he consoles himself with sausages and vodka.

All this I had to express without a word, in mime and dance, and make the meaning clear to the audience. They swore that it was the funniest performance they had ever seen, and pleaded that I should repeat it in public.

I declined. Not till later did I discover that nobody had guessed what I was aiming to represent.

* * *

Cracow, an important railway centre, housed a Russian garrison. It was not always appreciated. Stories of hold-ups were less common than in Warsaw, for since Cracow is almost undamaged and near to the coalfields, it has been possible to keep the main streets brightly illuminated at night.

The people of Cracow accept the situation with their usual wit: "We have endured five years of German occupation. We will endure a year or two of independence."

* * *

"The Russians do understand the art of secret police work. We could always get the better of the German Gestapo, who were often stupid, but not of the Russian N.K.V.D."

* * *

A Polish Socialist: "When it comes to the elections, we shall have to lend some candidates and votes to the Communists. It would not do to wipe them out altogether; the Russians might not like it."

* * *

A peasant: "Yes, the Russians did a lot of looting, but we got the better of them in our village. They used to halt here when driving convoys of horses from Germany to Russia. We would give them vodka: then, while they were happy, we would exchange an old crock for a good German horse. The Russians didn't mind—so long as they could produce the right number of horses, that was all that mattered. Would you like to see our horses? We are still very short in numbers, but the quality is excellent."

* * *

The sense of humour of the Poles is irrepressible, even in the presence of secret police.

I have mentioned the Russian propensity for acquiring watches. This, grossly exaggerated, has already become a stock joke in Poland, attaining the "regular" class of the mother-in-law or the price of beer. When the news-reels showed pictures of Stalin greeting Churchill at Yalta, Polish audiences shouted cheerfully: "Look after your watch, Winston!"

THE NEW PROVINCES

I

THE BIG THREE CONFERENCES AT YALTA and Potsdam recognised that, in compensation for the eastern provinces lost to Russia, Poland "must receive substantial accessions in the north and west." While the final delimitation of the western frontier was left to the Peace Conference, the Provisional Polish Government was authorised to extend its authority up to the rivers Oder in the north and Western Neisse in the south.

Territorial compensation to the north of Poland obviously indicated East Prussia.

We have already noted the history of this detached province: how it was conquered by the Teutonic Knights, became a vassal state of Poland, and eventually the foundation on which the German Empire was erected. As such it has no great claims to sentimental consideration from Germany's victims or opponents.

In 1939 the total population was 2,330,000 (this figure does not include Danzig). This was 3·6 per cent. of the population of Germany, but East Prussia comprised 7·6 per cent. of the total area of the Reich. Adjoining the Memel territory are about 60,000 Lithuanians: to the west are a larger number of Poles. In the southern area live a tribe called the Masurians, who are Slavs akin to the Poles—and were generally counted as Poles even by the Germans.

(Nevertheless, it should be noted that in 1920 a plebiscite was held in the Masurian area—and it went in favour of Germany. This may have been the result of the long and intense process of Germanisation, and to the character of the region—a mainly agricultural province, consisting largely of large estates under almost feudal conditions, owned exclusively by German *Junker* families. With the members of the local administration—all German—they formed a powerful influence, especially in the mixed-population areas. Nevertheless, the more likely explanation of the 1920 vote is given by the Masurians themselves—the date of the plebiscite, which was held when Poland appeared likely to be overwhelmed by Russia. That is to say, the Masurians were asked to exchange the comparative security of Germany for the apparent insecurity of the unknown Bolshevik régime.)

In all, there were about 400,000 Masurians and Poles. The remainder of the population of East Prussia is German, though many of the people have Slav blood in their veins.

The figures I have quoted indicate the sparseness of the population—sixty-three to the square kilometre, which is one-half of the German average. The demographic structure differs from that of the Reich mainland. In East Prussia 38·4 per cent. of the population lives in towns, 61·6 per cent. in villages: in



Racial Distribution in East Prussia

Germany 64·4 per cent. lives in towns, 35·6 per cent. in the country.

For generations East Prussians have been leaving their homeland for the richer provinces of Germany—from 1871 to 1933 over 982,000 people emigrated—this despite official efforts to check the exodus by tax rebates, abundant credits, and even direct subsidies to skilled artisans and professional men. Special

State subventions failed to maintain a healthy agricultural economy—their alternative intent was to maintain the power and influence of the *Junker* classes. The average standard of life was the lowest of any area in Germany. The absence of large towns meant a lack of markets for agricultural products—Berlin was 300 miles away. Economically, East Prussia falls within the Polish sphere rather than the German. The Germans recognised this by attaching that part of Poland north of the Vistula to East Prussia in their territorial adjustments in Poland. Now this natural economic union is to be maintained in reverse—by the attachment of the greater part of East Prussia to Poland. Economically the region will gain considerably.

Yet economics cannot compete with national pride. It was the *Junkers* of East Prussia who built up the policy of militarism, based upon the *Herrenvolk* idea. They formed an exclusive clique who between them provided a disproportionate number of German Army officers. East Prussia was an outpost of Germanism. Treitschke described its strategic role as “a German fortress in the Slavonic mud.”

This situation was well appreciated by the Russians. From East Prussia Germany could infiltrate into Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. The strategic threat to Poland is obvious from a glance at the map. Thus it is not surprising that Russia and Poland were for once agreed: all parties considered that East Prussia should disappear from the map.

There is much to be said for the decision. The revival of the “Corridor” in 1919 could have worked had the Germans so wished. We have seen that the “Corridor” was historic Polish territory, but its economy had become closely attached to that of Germany since its seizure by force in 1772. Thus the flow of trade from north to south and from east to west—quite compatible trends—depended upon mutual toleration and goodwill, which on the German side was completely lacking. Since they rejected the idea so forcefully, the Germans can scarcely grumble if their neighbours now seek other methods. Any future Hitler could rouse the German people by waving a map of the “Corridor” and a detached East Prussia. Therefore, it was argued, the source of irritation should be removed. Gentle treatment by the physician having failed, a surgical operation was now necessary.

It has been drastically performed. The Russians have taken over the northern third of the province, up to and including the port of Königsberg. The remaining two-thirds have been allocated to Poland. Many of the Germans had already fled before the Russian advance; others are being turned out, replaced by Polish settlers from the Vilno area. With the permission

of the Poles, some Germans have opted to remain behind—they believe that they are of Slav ancestry, and are content to be Polonised. Their outlook is purely local: their attachment is to their family, village or farm rather than to a nation. The present generation is unlikely to change, but the children will be brought up as Poles.

In the early days of the occupation there was one unfortunate incident. The advancing Russian Army, not appreciating the local situation, treated the Masurians as Germans. This was not likely to reconcile them to a change of nationality. However, the mistake was later recognised, and Poland endeavoured to make handsome amends. The Masurians have secured their fair share in the parcellation of the big *Junker* estates, and there are hopes that they will settle down amicably under Polish rule.

The annexation of East Prussia savours of power politics rather than of the Atlantic Charter—though the enemy countries were expressly excluded from its provisions. The vital necessity to ensure that 1939 shall never be repeated overrides all other conditions of the peace settlement.

At one time it was envisaged that the whole province would be allocated to Poland, and there was much disappointment when Russia occupied the important port of Königsberg. In the long run, however, this may be a great advantage to Poland. Any future Hitler, seeking to regain the historic province of the old Reich, will have to attack both Poland and Russia. This change on the map of Europe is likely to be permanent.

It goes without saying that Danzig will be allocated to the new Poland. Here, again, the Versailles policy of moderation failed, and the Danzigers have only themselves to blame in that they are given no second chance. This time Polish rule over the major Vistula port will be absolute, and already steps are being set in operation for the re-Polonisation of this vital outlet. There will be no place in the new Gdansk for Fifth Columnists or German "tourists." After 1919 a large number of retired Army officers—36,000 in all—settled in Danzig. They told me that the reason prompting their selection of this region was the low rate of taxation, but many of them proved to be active agents of Nazi aggression. They are not likely to have a second opportunity!

Economically and geographically, Danzig is closely associated with Poland, its natural hinterland. Now it will be integrally incorporated in the Republic.

We have already examined the question of Upper Silesia, bitterly debated after the First World War. It was quite certain that Poland would put forward new demands when Germany was beaten, and they are not unjustified.

Summarised, Upper Silesia was a historic Slav province, incorporated in the Austrian Empire and then seized by Germany. Since that time it has disclosed valuable mineral resources, and thus attracted many German "colonists," the rural areas remaining predominantly Polish. The Plebiscite of 1921 was not entirely satisfactory—no plebiscite ever is—and the Germans have consistently denied reasonable minority rights to their Polish subjects. Further, Upper Silesia was a vital part of the German war arsenal.

Obviously, then, the Polish demand for the incorporation of the remainder of Upper Silesia was certain to be favourably entertained by the Allies. The mineral and other wealth will prove invaluable to impoverished Poland.

Nor need the transfer of Upper Silesia impair its own economic prosperity. The area was so far detached from the main centres of German industry that only a minority of its products were used in Germany—only 8·3 per cent. of its pig-iron in 1929, for example. Later, industries were deliberately stimulated for war purposes—since Silesia was furthest from British bombers.

The loss of the remaining section of Upper Silesia would weaken the German war potential. Geographically, the province forms a wedge thrust between the Poles and the Czechs: as such it was a strategic base of great importance, used in turn against both neighbouring Slav States. The removal of the Silesian wedge is considered by Poland and Czechoslovakia as indispensable for their security.

Yet the acquisition of East Prussia and Upper Silesia only touches the fringe of the problem. There were about 4 million Poles in the Lwow-Vilno areas taken over by Russia. Of these, about 1 million could be planted in the Polish portion of East Prussia, once it were cleared of its German inhabitants. Another half a million—maybe more—could be transferred to Upper Silesia. What of the others—to say nothing of the 2 million landless peasants living in overcrowded rural Poland?

The answer was envisaged at Yalta and confirmed at Potsdam. The Polish Provincial Government, backed by Russia, demanded ample territory at Germany's expense in compensation for that lost to Russia. At one time the River Oder was suggested as the boundary: then the idea was extended to the Western Neisse River in the south and the Oder in the north.

We should be quite clear as to what this involves. There is a security argument for the elimination of East Prussia, and an ethnic argument for the allocation of Upper Silesia to Poland, but the Oder-Neisse provinces are almost entirely German. Nor can their seizure be justified on grounds of security.

One Polish minister referred to them as the "Western territories which we have recovered." I told him bluntly that I considered this viewpoint absurd. It is true that the provinces were Polish in the distant past, but the Germans have pushed steadily eastward and have occupied the lower Oder basin for hundreds of years. Historically and ethnically, the Polish argument has scarcely a basis of justification: on the grounds of compensation for the lost territories in the East, it is very strong.

The provinces were not formally handed over at Potsdam, but the Polish administration was installed—which in practice means much the same thing. It will be exceedingly difficult for any peace conference to deprive Poland of the new territories—especially as Russia supports the transfer and Russian armies are still in occupation.

One of my principal objectives in visiting the new Poland was to see what was happening in the Oder provinces. At this stage, therefore, I will resume a personal narrative, returning to general considerations later. I should perhaps emphasise that I made contact with hundreds of Poles, official and unofficial, on my journey, but usually I travelled at my own inclination. No Pole bears any responsibility for what I saw or did not see; and, of course, any opinions expressed are my own.

I made my journeys haphazard. A conducted tour is quite useless in such a case. An official is not concerned to show the average, but the most favourable.

I would go to the prefect of a county. "Are you evicting any Germans to-day?"

"Yes." He would lead me to his wall map. "In these districts—A, B, C, and D."

"Thank you. I will go to C."

I would set off in the direction of C, but never arrived: instead, I turned off to D. Thus, if a nice set-piece awaited me at C, I missed it: but at D I was not expected. Thus in the course of many visits I got something like a true average of impressions.

In Cracow I had seen official propaganda about the new provinces—huge maps erected in the market-place, with photographs and statistics. In the peasant villages I had heard eager discussions of prospects in the new promised land. With great expectations, therefore, I set off from Katowice and crossed the frontier of what had so recently been Germany.

After proceeding for three miles, I halted abruptly. Across a field a woman was ploughing—and she was using milking cows. This unusual occurrence demanded explanation.

As I walked across the field, the woman suddenly unhitched the cows from the plough and drove them hurriedly towards the village. I followed, and eventually got the explanation: her horse had been stolen—and she thought that I was another Russian who had come to steal her cows!

I stayed in the village—once accepted as English, it seemed to be assumed at once that I was not a cow-stealer.

"The cows are not used to the plough, but they do their best," said the woman. "We shall manage."

"Yes, there were Germans in this village," said a peasant farmer. "The teacher and the policeman: all the peasants were Poles."

"They tried to Germanise us for years. My brother was once jailed for the crime of speaking Polish in public. In some ways, the more they did to us, the more Polish we became."

"The Russians? We don't know them very well. They must be very good soldiers, for they beat the Germans—and *they* were good. But the Russians steal much more than the Germans did."

"And the thing we could not understand was this: all over Silesia were large manor houses—German landlords or industrialists lived in them. The Russians burned them down. We could understand that they did not like German landlords, but why burn down good houses? We could have put many families of homeless peasants in them. Still, man's judgment is always warped by war: my father used to say that."

The following day I saw my first evictions of German peasants. They were fairly typical, so can be described in detail.

The organisation is simple. Katowice is the reception centre for Polish peasants sent from the Lwow area, now incorporated in Russia. When the departure of a train-load is notified from the Polish eastern frontier, the Germans in a village are warned that their time is getting short. Then, when the Polish peasants arrive at Katowice, a man cycles round to the German farms.

"You will be leaving at about two o'clock to-day. You may take with you what you can carry. Take food for at least five days. Be all ready."

I went out on a lorry which carried two Polish families. With us were an official and three soldiers—the latter in case of trouble, which never arose. We halted at a little farm, and I went in with the official.

We encountered an agitated and dispirited woman with three

weeping children. About her were ancient suitcases, hopelessly overpacked, and shapeless bundles, well-roped.

"Where do we go?" she asked, dully.

"To Berlin," said the Pole. "After that, wherever your own people send you."

"Where do you want to go?" I asked.

"I don't know. I want to find my husband. He is in the German Army somewhere—I have not heard from him for months."

Tragedy in a few sentences: but the official was consulting his list.

"Eight hectares—one horse and two cows," he read.

"Only one cow now," she corrected.

"A tidy little farm. I have a family it will fit very nicely."

He went out to the lorry and called a name. "You have a wife and two children? Here is a farm for you—eight hectares: one horse, one cow."

The Polish peasant smiled: his wife and children, distressingly tired, climbed down from the lorry. They gathered their bundles—like the Germans, they had had to leave behind all their major possessions.

The German woman was signing a form as the newcomers entered her house. A little boy was sobbing bitterly because he could not take his dog with him.

"Never mind, sonny," the Polish official said, producing sweets. "This new boy will look after your dog for you."

He explained the position to the Polish boy, who nodded vigorously. The two children went out into the yard to see the dog.

At the last moment the woman broke down. "This is my home," she wailed. "My children were conceived and delivered in that bed! Oh, where shall I find my husband?"

We carried her bundles out to the waiting lorry: it now carried one German and one Polish family.

Our next halt provided a difficult case. The Germans are not forced to evacuate the new territories, but if they stay it can only be as labourers—and as Poles. Many have opted to stay, because they are afraid of the conditions reported from Germany. Later they may change their minds.

Most difficult are the cases of intermarriage. It was one of those which we now tackled. Again the woman was alone but for her children: that is the saddest part of the tragedy, that the men are seldom at hand to share it.

"Have you made up your mind?" the Polish official asked.

"Oh, help me!"

"How can I? You are the only one who can decide."

The woman appealed to me. She was Polish—at least, she

thought she was Polish, since that was her mother-tongue—but had married a German. Now she had to choose. She could remain—and could retain her farm without hindrance. Yet, as in the previous case, her husband was in the German Army.

How could I decide for her? A tragedian would have been overwhelmed at the moments of intense silence before she made her final decision. Then:

"Give me the papers. I must go to my husband."

She was pale but controlled as she gathered her bundles. I was comforting a little girl with the thought that she was going to find her daddy.

The Polish family entered: they also had come from the Lwow area. They looked round the cottage in delight.

"It is better than the one we left," they said. "And a roof of our own again! The Russians turned us out two months ago, so we have been living in the fields. This is fine—yet why did it have to be? We were very happy where we were. That poor woman is now turned out as we were turned out. Has she enough food for her journey?"

The Polish woman went out to see. I transferred to another lorry, waving a farewell—and hoping that the little girl would find her daddy.

At the next house a man received us—a demobilised soldier, with a lame leg. He had accepted the situation, and his packing had been methodical.

"This is a mad world," he commented. "Six years ago I was clearing Poles out of Poznan. Now Poles clear me out of my own home!"

"So you were at Poznan?" I echoed, more than interested. I have described the German clearance of Gdynia in 1939: that of Poznan followed the same lines. "How does this method compare?"

He hesitated: "I must admit that this is civilised in comparison," he said. "None of us liked the job, but orders were orders."

"At least there is no brutality here."

"No—not here." He halted abruptly, eyeing the Polish official.

"Go on—you have something to say," I insisted.

"Look at my children!"

A little boy was wearing three suits; a girl looked like a stuffed doll; the woman of the house appeared, obviously wearing several frocks.

"Maybe by this means we can escape the looters," said the German.

In the hundreds of evictions I witnessed, there was no brutality. The three soldiers hung about, unemployed. Yet the worst was

to come. Our lorries would take the evicted families to the railway: on the train the Germans would be robbed.

I have said that the Polish police have disappeared, replaced by a "People's Militia." Any observer in Europe to-day is automatically suspicious of the use of the words "People's" or "Democratic." I heard complaints that the Militia was exclusively composed of Communists, but this is not true—there are not enough Communists in Poland to fill its ranks. Yet the Communists were responsible for its recruitment, and must answer for its shockingly low quality: I hope sincerely that my impressions were unfortunate, but most of the specimens I encountered suggested the dregs of the jails.

At least some of them were frank. "Yes, we do relieve the Germans of their bundles," they admitted. "If we didn't, the Russians would. We saw it happen as soon as we handed over the Germans in the Russian zone. The Russians have had their share of loot already—it's our turn."

Later I put the point very strongly to Polish friends in influential quarters. Here was a serious blot on an improvised scheme which on the whole is working well. They promised investigation, but always added a pertinent comment:

"Don't expect us to be sorry for the Germans. You have seen what they did to us."

This is an elementary argument, full of force. It was true that looting of personal possessions was mild compared with the German brutality in Poland. Yet I could not restrain a sense of the unfairness of it all. The German people must share with their leaders responsibility for the crimes which have aroused the indignation of the world; yet it seemed that an undue share of the punishment was being borne by a fragment of the Germans.

No one could envy them their fate. I saw them put on the train. The journey to Berlin could have been done in five hours, but they had been warned to take food for five days. There would be long halts as the boundary of the Russian zone was reached, and elsewhere. In some cases the journey runs into weeks rather than days. Then there is a shortage of food. In the cold weather there is no heating on the trains. Add to this the looting of clothing and blankets, and it will be seen that the stories of dead Germans being lifted from the trains in Berlin are not entirely exaggerated.

The survivors are allowed to stay in Berlin for twenty-four hours. Then they must get out and go to some corner of Germany—where nobody wants them, where no provision for their reception exists, and where many of the means of subsistence have already been withdrawn. It seems likely that millions of Germans have been condemned to die.

There are people who argue: "The Germans asked for it: now

they've got it. They made other people suffer—let them suffer themselves." Yet the very people who are to-day so hard are at heart very sentimental. When, in the months to come, they hear stories of German suffering, their emotional pendulum is likely to swing full arc. Instead of being too hard, they may become too soft: this is just as dangerous.

There is danger at every turn. As the train was being packed, I argued with an angry German who had been turned out of his house. I pointed out that he was paying the price of war, a penalty freely inflicted by the Germans on other people. Yet, in the days when we are discussing the regeneration of Germany, I frequently recall his last bitter comment as the train pulled out: "These Russians and Poles are as bestial as we were told. I thought that it was propaganda, but now I see that it is true. We were better off than this under Hitler!"

IV

There is a limit to the emotional stress which a man can endure without loss of objectivity, so I asked for a list of villages where Polish families had already been settled. Again I visited them at random. I needed a happy atmosphere to counteract the gloom of the evictions.

I had noticed the surprised delight of the Poles at the first sight of their new homes. Generally, living standards in Europe become lower from west to east, and the brick houses of the German small farmers are far superior to the timber and thatched cottages of the peasant villages in Eastern Poland. If the current theory that human happiness depends upon economics is well founded, then the Polish settlers should be delighted.

Yet this is not the atmosphere which I encountered. I found myself listening to stories verging on tragedy rather than romance.

The first woman I met spoke with almost Biblical simplicity: I record her story verbatim:

"When we married, we lived with my husband's parents. But when I was to have a baby he said, 'A baby is young, and my parents are old, and the two do not mix. We must now have a house of our own.' So he went into the forest and felled trees, and smoothed them. I helped him build, stuffing the moss in the cracks of the beams. So we built our cottage, and painted it blue. Then my baby was born, and the others. As we could, we added barns, and another room. It was our home. Life was hard, but we were happy.

"Then the Russians took my husband away, nearly six years ago. I have never heard from him. I cried, but always by myself, so as not to frighten the children. Then they told me that I must

leave my cottage and come here. Why? I had done nothing. They gave me this house instead. It is very fine. It has stairs—there is another floor above this, you know. It has electric light, and an electric stove, but I am afraid to touch it. Yes, it is very grand, but it is not my own—it is another woman's home. She has been turned out as I was. I want to go back to my own home."

But her son had different ideas: he was about sixteen, and in the absence of his father would run the farm.

"This is a fine place. It has brick barns—there is lots of hay and straw. I have found seeds for the spring sowing, and fertilisers. There is a very good plough. We were allowed to bring a cow and a pig with us—the Russians took our horse. There was a cow and a pig here, and a horse, and chickens. We are much better off."

An older man in the next cottage did not agree with him:

"They have given me a seventeen hectare farm—I only had five on my farm near Tarnopol. But these youngsters go into delight because the houses are so pretty. You will know that the heart of a peasant is in his soil, not in his cottage.

"This soil is thin—not nearly as good as mine was. I shall have to work twice as much to raise the same crops. Still, I am alive. My son is with the Polish Army in England—will you help me to find him?"

Here are a few other stories: I wrote them down as soon as I left the cottages. Naturally, I did not produce a notebook before the peasants, or they would have been scared—they were already nervous about the activities of the secret police.

"I can't believe that this nice house is mine. Will it last? We have been pushed in and out of places for so many years that we cannot believe that we are settled for ever. Do you think that it is true?"

"I miss most my treasures. We could only bring clothes, for we had to carry our own bundles. I left my dower chest behind, and my cradle. No, I shan't need the cradle again, but my daughter will—it was my mother's. I was knitting for her when they sent us away. In the hurry, my knitting got left behind. I have been very grieved about it."

"They took my son to Siberia. Why don't they send him back? The war is over, isn't it?"

"My teacher at school told me that Russia was a large country, a sixth of the whole world. Why, then, did the Russians want my little farm?"

"There is something wrong with our civilisation. I used to hear propaganda that the world would never be put right except by Communism, but it was Russian policy which made this necessary."

Very few of the people in this village—nearly all from the Lwow

area—could believe that the frontier with Russia was now finally determined. It had changed so often in their lifetime—this must be just another politician's wrangle. Later on, they would go back home.

There was a pathetic belief in the power and influence of Britain. Word flashed round the village that I had arrived, and within a few minutes something like a deputation had assembled—complete with huge bouquets of flowers, which I accepted with some embarrassment. Peasant after peasant bowed, kissed my hand, and begged me to use my influence to get them sent back.

When I protested that I had none, someone suggested America. One woman had a son who was a sub-postmaster in Chicago—he must be a very powerful man, and would get things done.

I talked to them very gently. They had been cut off from news for years, so I gave a résumé of events. I never had so attentive an audience. It seemed that the eastern frontiers were now finally drawn, I suggested. The evicted peasants were the innocent victims of power politics. However, I pointed out, at least everything possible was being done to re-settle them happily. They were better housed and had larger farms. In most barns was stock which would see them through the winter: if not, the government would help. I agreed that it was very hard that they should be uprooted so abruptly from the midst of their old associations, but suggested that they should make the best of it for the sake of their children. Here, at least, they had a heritage which could be made secure.

When on my return to England I heard criticisms of the Poles for turning out the Germans from the Oder provinces, I remembered the Polish peasants whose one thought was to get back home. It cannot be repeated too often that the Poles have not moved their frontiers westward of their own choice, but by compulsion. The Poles did not invent the Curzon Line: these peasants had never even heard of it!

V

In several previous books¹ I have argued in favour of the exchange of minorities in the countries of Europe. Since the war ended, I have seen nothing to alter my opinion.

All land frontiers are artificial and imperfect. The races are so mixed that any line of division is bound to leave thousands of people on the wrong side. Thus there were Poles in Germany and Roumans in Poland, Roumanians in Bulgaria and Bulgarians in Roumania.

A comfortable theory, widely held in Britain and America, is

¹ See *The New Europe*.

that such people must learn to live together in peace and friendship. The English Channel and the Atlantic Ocean often generate an artificial and rather smug outlook; it is so easy to preach to other people on problems which scarcely concern ourselves. This type of wishful thinking can be dangerous in a hard modern world. Anybody who imagines that Poles and Germans are likely to live together in peace and friendship is living in a fanciful world of fairy make-believe.

So long as there are minorities, so long there remain the seeds of quarrel and conflict. The situation is especially dangerous when one of the interested Powers is much stronger than its neighbours—we have seen how Germany used her minorities in other countries to prepare the way for her campaign of domination. It is quite certain that no country will wish to house a German minority in the future.

When small countries have similar problems, the situation is just as dangerous if not as obvious. The question of the Hungarian minority in Roumania, for example, could easily disturb the peace of Europe even without outside assistance, but if one of the disputants is "adopted" by a Great Power, or finds itself within a "sphere of influence," then the prospects of clash are alarming.

I have seen exchanges of population in operation. I never pretended to enjoy the sight of people moved compulsorily from their homes, but I hold tenaciously to the opinion that the inconvenience of the few cannot be allowed to prejudice the safety of the many. If any other solution *were* possible, I would gladly advocate it. Pious resolutions forwarded from countries aloof from such difficulties are merely irritating.

There is nothing new or abnormal in the movement of people. In the days of emigration, 2 million people left Europe each year. Millions of people have been moved, under appalling conditions, while the war was on. The calculation I made in 1938 was that approximately 7 million people of minority populations would have to be exchanged—a small total compared with previous experience. I suggested that the exchange should be carried out over a period of years and under generous conditions. Some countries have now recognised quite frankly that the course is inevitable if the peace of Europe is to be secured. Russia and Poland, for example, are agreed on a complete exchange of minorities—the 4 million Poles in the ceded eastern territories are being sent into the new Poland, while the half million Ukrainians remaining in southern Poland are being transferred to Ukraine proper. Similarly, Roumania and Bulgaria are effecting a complete exchange of their minorities.

If may be that the moment is ripe for large-scale activity—since the war has uprooted so many millions, large-scale transfers

can be effected at once, while the atmosphere of movement is almost normal.

Yet, agreeing the necessity for exchange of minorities, it is essential to recognise that what is happening in eastern Poland and eastern Germany does not fall under that heading: this is a movement of populations, quite a different thing.

An exchange of minorities could be agreed on amicable terms by neighbouring countries, and once effected could lead to much friendlier relations between them. The present transfer of population has been inflicted by the conquerors on the conquered—and it will *not* lead to friendly relations with Germany. This is a point to which we must return.

Nor is it fair to place the blame for the procedure upon Poland, or even on Russia: Britain and U.S.A. may not have initiated the plan, but they did agree to it, and share the moral responsibility for its implications.

VI

I journeyed to the west. Oppeln was badly knocked about, for it had been the scene of a considerable battle. There were few Germans left in its quiet streets, but the remnants of the Polish population were much in evidence, and were highly pleased at the abrupt change of fortune. Oppeln has a worthy place in Polish history: its church houses the tomb of Piast, one of Poland's first kings.

The country between Oppeln and Breslau was shockingly devastated; it got worse with every mile to the west. Here the fighting had been very severe, and most of the German rural population had fled before the advance of the Russian Army. Now their farms offer the saddest of spectacles. Many of them have been thoroughly looted, and the livestock have been taken. The fields are hopelessly overgrown. Most of them had been sown before the battle approached, but had no subsequent attention: nor were the Russians able to reap the random harvest. Consequently oats and barley have grown haphazard, waist high, encumbered with weeds. I saw thousands of acres of good ground gone to waste, a desert of weeds.

It can be reclaimed, with effort. Immediately after the German retreat, a system of "squatter's rights" prevailed—any Polish peasant could seize a deserted German farm. The plan did not work. He seldom had any capital, and the farm offered no means of subsistence over the winter. I met many country carts loaded with peasants returning "home," to Central Poland, very disillusioned about the prospects of the new El Dorado. They would have been better off had they trekked under the government scheme.

"You have seen our caravans?" a Russian general asked me. They were in evidence on every road and every day. Proudly I was shown long trails of German horses, carts piled with furniture, and herds of cattle. This was part of the Russian revenge. "If anyone is to suffer, let it be the Germans—we have had *our* share."

The Russians were very willing to display their booty, but made their usual reactions when I produced a camera. In a police State, a camera means a spy. Eventually I got a few poor pictures in the rain, when everybody was too busy to notice me—and I was under a blanket, anyway.

I saw huge herds of black-and-white cattle being driven eastwards by groups of Russian girls. These were Displaced Persons, conscripted for service in Germany, and now working their passage home. Their hardiness was extraordinary. Scarcely one had a pair of shoes; most of them faced the cold rain in a cotton frock, clinging miserably to the lines of her figure. I doubt if cattle can do more than fifteen miles a day with safety—and 500 miles had to be covered. Yet these girls plodded on, camping at night by the side of the precious cattle, posting guards to ensure that none strayed.

Some of the loads on the carts were fantastic. I could well understand that German furniture should be seized to replace that destroyed in Russia, but with wardrobes and beds I saw the most amazing collection of junk I ever encountered. It seemed as if a village had been cleared out to the last nail. The rubbish heaps of Russia will be full when the convoys arrive.

The desolate countryside continued: I would ride ten miles without encountering an occupied farm. Breslau itself was badly damaged, but was still blatantly a German city. Only 120,000 of its original 650,000 inhabitants remained, and I never saw more unhappy people.

About 60,000 Poles have so far been settled in Breslau, and their existence is precarious—there are daily "incidents," both with recalcitrant Germans and with the Russian garrison. A Polish settler requires a full meed of courage before he moves to the west.

A few of Breslau's factories have been restarted, notably a works where railway trucks are made: an artificial silk factory is to reopen shortly. German technicians are retained until Poles can be trained to the jobs. Because of the "incidents," Germans were ordered to wear white arm-bands, but this was not rigidly enforced. Although they grumbled fiercely, their lot was happier than that of their own subject peoples: at least they were allotted the same rations as the Poles, even if this is not saying very much. Yet it would be too much to expect the Germans to be happy, or to accept the situation willingly. At present they are engaged in a

dour struggle for sheer existence; later on they will begin to think.

There were constant rows between the Russians and the Polish militia, generally quarrels over loot. It will be a day of rejoicing for the Poles when the Russians leave the Oder, but before that happens they should strain every nerve to build up a strong, reliable, non-political police force, the basis of authority. The present improvisation is neither esteemed by the Russians nor trusted by civilians, and I could blame neither of them.

Yet of all the towns of the Oder region, Neisse¹ has suffered the worst—it changed hands two or three times in bitter fighting. The intensity of the battle was obvious, and not only from the ruins, and thousands of burned-out tanks littered the surrounding countryside.

VII

I borrowed a bicycle from a Russian soldier, and rode to the south—for Neisse is only about twenty miles from the Czechoslovak frontier. The road wound gently through the Sudeten Mountains. But for the scars of war, this would be a pleasant area. In happier times watering-places bordered the little lakes and mountain streams: now they share the general devastation.

I rode up to the gentle pass so as to talk to the Czech guards, who were very interested to see an Englishman again after a gap of years. ("That is the amazing thing about you English—nobody ever knows where you will turn up next!") Then, as the sun gave a warning sign, I turned to the north by another route.

The road promised well, but after a mile I encountered the inevitable obstacle—a broken bridge. A woman in a nearby cottage called to me; conducting me through the farmyard, she indicated a ford. By removing my trousers, I could wade across the river, carrying the bicycle. The incident illustrated a major difficulty of the region. By the accident or design of battle, practically all the bridges were destroyed. To keep their main communications going, the Russians have replaced many of them, but the erections were necessarily of timber, and their life is estimated at about a year.

The green hills were very pleasant in the evening glow as I

¹ Its Polonised name is now Nysa. We shall have to get used to a new nomenclature in the Oder provinces and East Prussia as Polish names replace the Germans. Here are some of the principal cases:

Szczecin—Stettin.

Opole—Oppeln.

Wrocław—Breslau.

Elbląg—Elbing.

Kurdzyn—Marienwerder.

Kalobrzeg—Kolberg.

Ślupsk—Stolp.

Koszalin—Koslin.

Lignica—Liegnitz.

Ślubice—Frankfurt-an-Oder.

Zgorzelec—Görlitz.

Gdańsk—Danzig.

Malbork—Marienburg.

Obsztyn—Allenstein.

rode down a lovely valley. Suddenly a man appeared from the bordering trees. He was in tattered German uniform—a fairly common sight: evidently a demobilised soldier. Yet he did not speak German. I could make out a few words of his conversation, but could not follow him; all that was certain was that he spoke a Slav tongue. I thought that he might be a Czech—there are many Czech families on the wrong side of the frontier in this region. He held up his hands in a cheerful gesture at our lingual helplessness, accepted a cigarette, grinned with pleasure when he understood that I was English, then disappeared into the woods.

I halted again, at a cottage which proudly displayed a Polish flag. A woman sat at the open door, a baby at her breast.

"I have heard that the English are feeling very sorry for the Germans being turned out of here," she said as I drew her story from her. "Do they know what is happening to us? In the Lwow area there is terror—bandits at large, shooting and burning. My farm was on the *Polish* side of the new frontier, near Przemyśl, but that did not stop the Ukrainian devils.

"They burned down my farmhouse. Why? Do not ask me that, or what they mean by it. My husband was taken away by the Germans months earlier, but his father was at home, and we had kept the farm going. But he was a brave man, his father, though old, and he resisted the Ukrainians. So, of course, he died.

"I took my children to Przemyśl—I was expecting another, this one. There was no place for us. Thousands were in the same plight as me. We lived like gipsies, in shacks. My baby was born out in the open, by a log fire. As soon as I could, I came out here. They have promised to try to find my husband. If they did, I would be very happy. This is a good farm, when we have cleared the waste. I do a few yards every day. If my husband came, he is strong, and with great courage. We would make a good farm of this."

She did not appreciate her own courage; but I did, as I surveyed the wilderness of weeds round about.

Later I checked up her statement that Ukrainians were raiding in the Przemyśl area. It was true. Dozens of villages have been razed to the ground, people killed, and their cattle stolen. Was it sheer loot, or the aftermath of war? Or a campaign for a further-west frontier? No one seemed to know, but no explanation could soften the effects.

At Przemyśl are gathered the Polish refugees from the Lwow area. Their plight is as bad as that of the Oder Germans. Many have spent three months in the open. At least the Germans are not turned out until there are Poles ready to step in, but this does not apply in the East.

Poland's missing men are one of her greatest problems. Women are working heroically to keep the peasant farm going, or to build up new homes, but the men are sadly needed. Hundreds of thousands are still exiled in Germany or Russia. The proportion of orphans in Poland must be shockingly high. Of the 38,000 refugees from Russia who entered Przemysl in October, 1945, 22,818 were children, most of them without parents.

I was depressed as I rode on. These people have endured so much, yet have not reached the end of their tribulations. When they are cleared out of their homes in the east, they are stimulated by accounts of the Promised Land in the west. "Come to Poland's new Paradise," read one official poster. "Land and work for all! Make your fortune in the west!" proclaimed the official radio. To some peasants this promise is fulfilled, but those settled in the desolated areas must compare bitterly the promise and the fulfilment. Only a hardy and persevering people could tackle such a legacy of devastation.

Darkness fell, and I had no lamp. In such circumstances, the golden rule is to forget the troubles of other people, and to concentrate on the road ahead. I neglected this elementary precaution, and suddenly found myself flung to the ground.

Suspecting bandits, I jumped up to fight—only to bang my head against something extremely hard. For the moment I was dazed; then I began to explore. My hasty contact was with a derelict German tank, sprawling across the road. I returned next day to photograph it, and agreed that I could scarcely have missed it.

My front wheel was slightly buckled, but would turn. With my head aching furiously, I rode on. My next halt was nearly as abrupt but not as painful, as I was held up by Russian soldiers.

I was in an awkward situation. The man who lent me the bicycle had probably looted it, but I could scarcely explain to him that I had allowed it to be stolen from me! Fortunately, I had his name and address on a piece of paper, so that I could return the bicycle. By devious methods, I was able to explain this, and was allowed to proceed.

I was staying with a Polish official, whose wife produced aspirins. I thought gratefully of bed, but other officials appeared, anxious to talk. Eventually, I forgot my encounter with the tank, for the conversation led towards drama.

"I've got the toughest job," one of the men was saying. "I'm responsible for order. Imagine it: the town destroyed, no lights, no anything. No police—a few men who are called militia, and who provide some of my worst offenders, and some troops. The Polish peasants coming into the districts have had to fend for themselves for years, which doesn't encourage a conventional

moral outlook. Then there are our Russian allies—you may have heard of them in other parts?”

I assured him that I had!

“There are hold-ups and shots every night. I can do nothing. You will stay in to-night, of course. You are quite safe if you keep out of the way.

“That’s the beginning. Then there are the mines—we’ve removed 10,000 already, and goodness only knows how many more there are. Don’t go down this lane at the back of the house, by the way; it hasn’t been cleared yet.

“Then there are the Germans. There are about 2,000 of them left. They are not merely sullen, but quite open in their ideas of revenge. It’s very difficult to get any collaboration—if a man works with me, he is liable to be murdered.”

“Have you come across any trace of the *Vehme*¹ organisation?” I asked.

“Why, how did you know?” he cried, very surprised.

“Another thing I’ve heard about in other places,” I replied.

¹ The *Vehme* was an organisation, probably of pagan origin, which claimed judicial rights—probably derived from those of pagan priests. In mediæval days Vehmic tribunals supplemented or supplanted the administration of justice exercised by local nobles, especially in Westphalia. *Echevins*, or members of the “Holy” *Vehme*, consisted of princes, bishops, ministers, feudal landlords, and the like. However beneficent the first intentions of the tribunal—to give a man justice against his overlord—the *Vehme* rapidly deteriorated into a Secret Society of the worst type. A mere accusation was quite sufficient to send a victim to his death—the accused did not even appear at the trial, since if acquitted he could reveal Vehmic secrets—itsself a “crime” punishable by death. Thus the first intimation for the unhappy victim was when the rope encircled his neck, or the sword was plunged into his body. *Echevins* found in the tribunals an excellent method of disposing of private enemies.

Gradually public opinion in Germany hardened against “Tribunals” which had deteriorated into no more than the activities of an underground murder gang, but it was not until the eighteenth century that the *Vehme* organisation finally lost its powers.

The Germans have a peculiar interest in their pagan origins, and it is common for them to apply ancient names to modern devices. Thus, in 1919, Germans who accepted defeat sullenly set themselves to reform the *Vehme*. Their activity took the form of assassinating such of their fellows as were willing to collaborate with the Allies. In the British zone of occupation alone over 500 Germans were murdered. The *Vehme* also set itself against the Weimar Government, which it accused of being unpatriotic.

Knowing the conservatism of the Germans, it was not surprising that the same idea was revived in the hour of defeat in 1945. Anti-Nazi Germans who were willing to collaborate with the Allies were brutally murdered. German girls who “fraternised” with foreign soldiers were ruthlessly treated—and often the soldiers themselves were maltreated. If the *Vehme* did not control Nazi organisations like the Werewolves, it was certainly closely associated with them.

In some parts of Germany it is intensely disliked by the ordinary people. In the areas taken over by Russia and Poland, however, it can depend upon wide popular support, since practically every German, whatever his politics,

"I'm on to the track of something," he asserted. "Ten days ago a German was murdered—he had been working in my office. His widow told me that he was fetched away by masked men. I thought that she was romancing until we found his body. He had been *beheaded*—under an oak tree."

"That sounds like the *Vehme*," I agreed. "Have you got them?"

"No. But I'm on the trail. I know one man who is implicated. He will lead me to the others."

"Why not announce that he is going to work with you, and watch him. Then, when the masked men come for him, you can grab them."

"That's an idea! There's one thing—I *can* deal with Germans: I can't with the Russians."

"By the way," I interrupted, for my encounter with the Russian soldiers had prompted my memory. I described my meeting with the man in the tattered German uniform—and I was now convinced that the language he spoke was Russian.

"Oh, hell!" said the Pole, wearily. "More trouble! I'd better go and warn everybody."

"What is it?"

"You remember General Vlassov, the Russian traitor who went over to the Germans and formed the 'Free Russia' movement? He recruited a big army, mostly of Ukrainians. When the Germans collapsed, one of Vlassov's divisions was to the south of here, in Czechoslovakia. It dissolved, and the men took to the mountains. They live by raiding and looting—and they're desperate. There's no future for them if they get into Russian hands, and they know it. They've given us hell's amount of trouble already, and now there's more to come. I should guess that your friend was a scout."

He went off to report, and I went to bed. The house was right outside the town, so that the night's casual shots did not disturb me: when the battle of tanks, steam-hammers and pneumatic drills inside my head had stopped, I went to sleep.

I was awakened by a considerable fusillade. It was still dark,

opposes the cession of German territory. This is one of the reasons why Russians and Poles are determined to clear all Germans from their new territories.

I very much doubt if we have heard the last of the *Vehme*—and similar terrorist organisations. They thrive on discontent—which is in ample supply in defeated Germany. Too many people in distant countries like Britain and U.S.A. make the comfortable assumption that the *Herrenvolk* theory in Germany is dead, and that the German people have learned their lesson. Some *have* done so, but I could find no blame for the Russian-Polish policy of taking no chances. After noting the political apathy of the Germans—for the following of the revived democratic parties is strong neither in will nor in numbers—I asked a prominent German Socialist (October, 1945):

"If a free election were held here to-day, which party would win it?"

"I can answer that at once and with certainty," he replied. "The Nazis!"

and I remembered my friend's excellent advice: "You are quite safe if you keep out of the way."

Yet I had a sneaking interest in the battle, as I had assisted in its preliminaries. As soon as it was light I got up, went out, and marched to the sound of the guns. I found half a company of Russian infantry blazing away into a desolation of weeds. Very occasionally an answering shot came back.

The officer in command—a Russian—was not very clear about the situation. There were raiders hidden in the corn—it could certainly have concealed a battalion—and he was to keep them occupied while another unit worked round to the rear.

A man reported a signal to the south. Firing ceased, and we took cover. There were sounds of a considerable action a mile or two away; then I saw two light tanks advancing through the corn and weeds.

The battle was over. From our sector three prisoners were brought in—Russians in German uniforms. I did not envy them.

And in my excitement I walked back to the house along the lane which had not been cleared of mines!

VIII

It was a Sunday mornng—a favourite day for a battle in this irreligious age. I rode out in the opposite direction, for I had no mind to encounter Vlassov stragglers. Yet it had been interesting to see them in the flesh—to know that they did exist. It is customary in propaganda accounts to refer to all Russian deserters and looters as Vlassov men. If this were true, he must have had a bigger army than anybody imagined.

I halted at a Russian camp. They had heard of the miniature battle, and plied me with questions. One officer confessed to a feeling of "great hurt," which I could well understand. British and Americans were hurt when a few dozen of their people were persuaded by the Nazis to turn traitor. The injury to Russian pride can be imagined, for Vlassov's renegades were numbered by the tens of thousands—and this does not include the men enlisted direct by the Germans, or the amazing Cossack army which served them in Hungary and Austria.¹ The blow was

¹ Many British soldiers came into contact with his remarkable force. It was recruited by the Germans for lines of communication services, and consisted of thousands of Cossacks with their families and horses. Their area of occupation resembled a huge gipsy encampment. They lived on the land, by their own methods, and the terror they inspired was useful to the Germans. If a Hungarian government ever showed signs of becoming recalcitrant, the Germans would suggest that they might not be able to keep the Cossacks in hand for very much longer. The resistance of the Hungarian government would usually crumble at the threat!

One of the most distasteful tasks ever allocated to the British Army was the compulsory repatriation of these Cossacks to Russia in the summer of 1945.

especially heavy to men who had believed the official accounts of Russia as a completely united country. There is no such thing, whatever its political or economic system.

Now I came to a village which had happily escaped the impact of battle. The cottages were neat and modern, and from each fluttered a red-and-white flag. Here at least the peasants were comfortably settled; yet again I found them nostalgically longing for home.

Previously I had suggested to a disconsolate woman that she should look at the situation from the viewpoint of her children. There was no mistaking the junior outlook. Within a few yards I encountered two groups: the first had bicycles, the wheels gaily decorated with the Polish colours; the second had horses, and carried the Polish flag. They rode with a purpose. This land had been Germany, and was now Poland. It must be given a Polish atmosphere, so these young people would ride around its roads and lanes, showing their colours and singing Polish songs. Then the trees and the fields—as well as any remaining Germans!—would know that this was indeed part of Poland.

These young people were not from Lwow, but from Central Poland. (In the Neisse county, settlements by September, 1945, included 30,000 from the Lwow area, and 18,000 from the region about Tarnopol.) The new provinces can help to solve Poland's problem of rural overpopulation. The final agrarian reform has supplied an additional urge. Peasants waited patiently, hoping against hope for land. Now *all* the great estates have been split up, and it is quite obvious that there are 2 million peasants for whom there never can be land. Such men can easily be induced to take a risk in new pastures.

About 10 per cent. give up the appallingly hard struggle against the depredations of war, the opposition of Nature, and the lootings of "Vlassov deserters." Every day I would see a cart on the pathetic trek back to a home village, the family it carried unhappy in their disillusionment.

Some, however, were cheerful enough. The Poles have their fair share of human failings, and there are people who view the present situation as a means to personal advantage. They go to the new provinces, take over a farm, decide that the life is too hard, and go back to Poland with all the produce from the barns! "Gleaners," they are contemptuously called by the Polish radio, which threatens them with terms of forced labour—for, obviously, they are a liability, since they make the farm even more difficult of occupation by a genuine settler. To add to the official annoyance, most of the "gleaners" travel to the west on a free pass!

But these are a small minority. "Most of the peasants go to

stay. The Promised Land was sometimes not as good as the advertisements, but was sometimes better: still it was land, the first dream of the peasant.

IX

I did not visit the northern sector, but I gathered that conditions there were much the same. North of Breslau the desert of weeds continues for miles, but Pomerania is but slightly damaged, and here peasants from the Vilno area and from Central Poland are being efficiently settled.

Stettin is comparable with Breslau. Of its 300,000 German inhabitants, only 60,000 remain, joined by 40,000 Poles. The Germans are mostly old men, women and children, all destined to be sent into Germany in their turn.

I met Poles who had come from the city; they did not pretend that their lot was happy. Life is hard in any corner of Poland in the aftermath of war, and is no easier in a conquered city. The spirit of hostility is intense, and in a town it is more difficult to exorcise than in the country. Further, the Russians were in strong military and naval occupation, the Polish "People's Militia" had few rights, and unfortunate incidents were all too common. One estimate was that fifty Polish settlers were killed or wounded every week, but the figure may be exaggerated. The blame was usually placed on the Russians, but I have said that some of the Polish settlers are of crude types; and the remaining Germans are often prepared to exploit the confusion of the situation.

To the east, Danzig is in a slightly different condition. It was badly damaged in the battle which led to its capture on March 27th, 1945. Incensed by the furious resistance, which continued from house to house, the Russian soldiers wreaked their vengeance, and the surviving German civilians received the sort of treatment which their own men had inflicted upon the conquered.

In July the clearance of the Germans began—methodically, street by street, on the pattern of Gdynia, but without its ferocious brutality. A few thousand Germans remain as labourers, but soon they too will be sent "home."

An American correspondent who visited Danzig was amazed to observe that the Russians were dismantling the port and taking its machinery to Russia. When he queried this, a Russian officer explained: "Well, yes, this is now part of Poland. But the Poles lost Danzig to the Germans in the fourteenth century. It is only fair that we should restore it to them in the same condition as when they lost it."

The Poles can perhaps be pardoned if they do not see the joke.

I returned to Katowice by a southern route, through the heart of Upper Silesia. For an industrial area, it is a very pleasant land, with green hills as background to the factory chimneys. There is no suggestion of a "Black Country" about it, not even where one town joins up with its neighbour. A penny tram ride would take any worker into the open country. Most of the factories are modern, with excellent facilities, and the housing estates compare with the best English models.

There had always been a large Polish population here, so that the hostile atmosphere of Breslau was lacking. Tens of thousands of Polish workers had moved in. Some came from other cities, but many from the overcrowded rural areas—I met even Gooral highlanders from the Tatra Mountains! Some complained that they had been misled by the official propaganda which had enticed their move, but most realised that there could be no such thing as easy living in Poland for years to come, and that Silesia at least offers opportunity.

Fortunately, the towns are but little damaged, and if the Russians had not removed the machinery so freely in the early days of their occupation, the industrial situation would be healthy. As it is, the Polish urban workers will have to exhibit the same hardihood as their peasant brothers. This will need a greater resolution, for the townsman is weaker than the countryman, less self-reliant. In Silesia the outward appearance was almost normal—trams running, shops and cinemas open, people in the streets. Beyond them, however, were the factory chimneys, only about one in three smoking. Every smokeless chimney represented dozens of men for whom there was no weekly wage, and without that shops and cinemas were worse than meaningless.

Far too many accounts of the settlement of Silesia ignore the Germans. I shall return to this point again, for it is of great importance. In Gleiwitz I was frightened. I wandered about a housing suburb of flats and cottages of Port Sunlight or Bournville standard. Casually, I commented on its quality to one of the inhabitants, a German.

"Adolf Hitler built it!" he said bitterly.

I was startled—not merely at the courage he displayed to say such a thing. For Adolf Hitler had *not* built the estate: I had seen it previously, before Hitler became Chancellor—it was the work of the much-decried Weimar Republic. That a man should make such a claim so openly was an unwelcome sign that the German spirit may be temporarily cowed, but is not broken.

One minor question will need definite settlement at the same time as the confirmation of the new Polish frontiers.

While it is planned to hand over the greater part of German Silesia to Poland, two small enclaves south of Breslau are designated for Czechoslovakia. These are the areas about Glatz and Ratibor, where there is a considerable Czech population. Their allocation to Czechoslovakia would also straighten out a complicated frontier.

The Czechs propose to evict the Germans from these and other Sudeten areas. President Beněs estimated that about half a million (out of 3 million) might be allowed to stay: the others had forfeited their rights to consideration by their conduct at the time of the Nazi attacks.

Immediately adjoining the new Polish frontiers on the Western Neisse, however, is a comparatively small area which may prove to be of considerable importance. This is Lusatia: sometimes called the Spree-Wald. The Germans featured it extensively in tourist literature: here was a people of old-world charm, with picturesque costumes and ancient customs; it was seldom mentioned that these idyllic people were not Germans.

They were often called Wends, or sometimes Lusatian Serbs—the latter being a corruption of Sorbs, for the people have nothing to do with the Serbs of Yugoslavia. They are a Slav tribe, akin to both Poles and Czechs—nearer to the latter than the former. A Pole or Czech can easily understand the Lusatian tongue.

A thousand years ago, we have seen, the Slav tribes spread right across Germany. Gradually they were pushed to the eastward—a movement initiated by Charlemagne. The Polish King Boleslas recovered Lusatia in 1018, but his successors lost the province—which, in 1348, was acquired by Bohemia, the Czech kingdom. Then, in 1635, it was seized by the Elector of Saxony.

These changes of feudal ownership scarcely affected the Slavs of Lusatia. Their country was a medley of marshland and sandy soil, a poor prize for any invader, and off all main routes. Left virtually to themselves, the Lusatians retained their language, costumes and customs.

They suffered their first serious blow in 1815, when their country was partitioned between Prussia and Saxony. Then an intensive policy of Germanisation began, while the industrialisation of Germany attracted Lusatians into other parts of the Reich. By 1939 it was estimated that only about a quarter of a million still used the Lusatian tongue; they knew German as well, of course, since this was the sole language of instruction in the schools.

Nevertheless, many of the Lusatians remained nationally conscious. In 1919 they sent a deputation to the Peace Conference demanding independence. This was refused, and when the Lusatian delegates returned to Germany they were arrested and charged with high treason.

Thereafter the Lusatians concentrated on the obtaining of minority rights, and on forming a separate Lusatian province within the Reich. Hitler at first appeared to smile on the idea, but later showed his hand: the local leaders were arrested and disappeared, and any suggestion of separation was ruthlessly checked.

First objective is naturally to find out the wishes of the Lusatians themselves. Their language and culture have survived, but do they want to change their country? Independent existence would be a geographic and economic impossibility. The Czech Prime Minister stated that his country was "very much interested" in the fate of the Lusatians, and if the district is to be detached from Germany, then attachment to Czechoslovakia is an obvious course.

Before the problem can be approached, a firm decision on the Polish western frontiers is essential. If they are to follow the Western Neisse, as at present, then Lusatia could join with Czechoslovakia—if its people so wished. If for any reason the Polish frontiers are withdrawn, then the problem becomes much more difficult, for a tongue of German territory between Lusatia and Poland would be a geographical absurdity.

XII

The total population of the Polish acquisitions in East Prussia and the Oder provinces was between 9 and 10 millions. Of these, nearly a million were Poles, and another million were Mazurians, closely related, or Germanised Poles or half-Poles, the result of mixed marriages. The majority of the latter have opted for Polish nationality.

Of the 7 million Germans, 3 million had fled into the interior before the advancing Russian armies. By December, 1945, just over 1 million had been expelled by the Poles before the approach of winter largely suspended operations.

In the new provinces, just over 2½ million Poles have been settled. Of these, a little over 1 million came from the Lwow-Vilno areas east of the Curzon Line, the remainder from Central Poland. Thus the task is only half-accomplished. About 3 million Germans remain to be expelled, and a similar number of Poles have still to be brought from the East. The process will be resumed in the spring of 1946.

Potentially, the Poles have a rich heritage in their new provinces. The land is reasonably fertile, and the mineral wealth of Upper Silesia is considerable. Nevertheless, their present plight is not enviable. A country devastated by war, undermined by years of enemy occupation, its economic system shattered, a foreign army in occupation, and a temporary government—such is a poor foundation for the absorption and development of new territories. It says much for the hardihood and courage of the Poles that they are willing to make the attempt. Given a little encouragement and help, I believe that they will succeed. They are short of capital, labour, machinery and materials, but they have faith.

RUSSIA AND POLAND

I

IT IS BOTH NATURAL AND OBVIOUS that in our consideration of Polish affairs we revert continuously to the outlook and influence of Russia. Indeed, these considerations weigh heavily in our judgment of world conditions and of future possibilities: Poland, as nearest neighbour, is vitally concerned, but every other country is affected.

After witnessing many evictions of Germans and talking with a wide variety of people, as described in the previous chapter, I stayed one night in the cottage of a village headman. He was a very intelligent man, with a lively sense of fun and humour. In the morning I got up early to help him milk the cows, and told him the story of the milkmaid who was feeling rather jaded: so the cow turned round and said, "All right, my dear, I understand. You just hang on, and I'll jump up and down."

He found this very amusing, and went off to tell his neighbours. He was still chuckling on his return. Suddenly the atmosphere changed: a peasant came in, weeping—the Russians had stolen his horse.

He had no other; and no cows. If he could not borrow from his neighbour, he must harness himself to the plough. A peasant's horse is half of his livelihood.

Soon afterwards a Russian general arrived to confer with the headman on some question of billeting. He had been knocked about in the fighting, and was now in charge of a branch of the commissariat services. He was one of the toughest men I ever met; I did not envy the Germans who had opposed him. He drank vodka out of *tumblers*, and consumed two in rapid succession, at 7 a.m!

He greeted me very civilly, but I was angry. I am very seldom angry, but when in that condition I lose all my customary mildness and could stand up to all the Russian generals in the world. I told him of this latest piece of looting, and commented, not only on the tragedy to the Polish peasant, but on the way in which Russian reputation was being damaged.

He was very willing to talk. He spoke a weird cosmopolitan language, composed of bits and pieces from many: I could understand most of what he said, but could never hit the right mixture myself, so used an interpreter. The conversation seemed

to me to introduce points of importance, so, with the interpreter's assistance, I set it down almost verbatim from the point where I got my anger under control.

"Our looting has been exaggerated, but it does exist," the Russian said. "If you will give me details of this case, I will have the man traced and shot."

"I would rather get the horse returned. But I am more concerned about the general principle. I agree that the looting is greatly exaggerated, but it is affecting Polish-Russian relations—and peace in Eastern Europe depends to no small extent on friendship between Poland and Russia."

"Maybe. Our outlook is very different. We have little in common with the Poles. It is not merely that they hate us. That would not matter, but they despise us; so we hate *them* for that."

"This is what I cannot understand," I said. "When last I saw the Russian Army, its discipline was magnificent. What has happened to it? You understand, stories come in from every corner of your area—often exaggerated, I agree, but I have seen for myself that they have a basis of truth."

"Discipline varies. In some units it is very high. You must understand that we have incurred terrible losses in this war—you have no idea of our casualties. So we had to recruit men from all kinds of people, including our Asiatic tribes. Many of them are in a very low state of development."

"But the men in this area are Russians."

"Yes. They have fought and suffered. Our code of punishments was very much more severe than yours. Thus, now the fighting is over, discipline sometimes cracks. Remember this too. Transport has been our major difficulty in this war."

"I can quite understand that," I said. "I commented on that before the war began."

"Yes. Rail networks were poor, and we never had enough lorries. We had to mobilise peasant transport for army supplies, and live on the land when we could. You see what this means? Very few Russian soldiers have been on leave since the war began. It was not possible. The German occupation of southern Russia meant that their families were scattered, anyway. The Russian likes his wife as much as any man does. So the long absence has been a strain. There are other viewpoints. Russia lagged behind Europe for centuries. We could not catch up in everything in twenty years. It is a mediæval idea—defeat brings loss, but victory means booty. We suffered when the Germans invaded Russia, and our men said: 'Wait until we get into Germany!' Well, now we are there!"

"But this is Poland——"

"Yes, yes. Wait. Our official policy is to make Germany pay."

If there is to be suffering in Europe, let the Germans suffer: we have already had our share. So we are carrying off from Germany anything which is portable. You have seen our caravans crossing Poland? The troops do the work of requisitioning. It is an easy step to private requisitioning."

"Or looting!"

"The same thing," he admitted calmly. "Or, if you like, revenge. We are primitive. Did you ever hear a phrase, 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'?"

"Yes."

"That is our policy in Germany. We are doing to them exactly what they did to us. That is not quite true. I correct myself. The Germans tried to strip Russia clean. We have stripped our zone of Germany of all machinery for potential war industries, and to replace that which the Germans stole from us. The rest we have left behind. You would be surprised at the number of factories which are working in our zone."

"And what happens to their produce?"

"You are beginning to understand our policy! We take what we need, and allow Germany to retain the rest. That is our policy always."

"This is interesting. In England there is a legend that you are treating the Germans very softly—allowing them to play politics and go to cinemas, and so on."

"Everything which we do is for ourselves, not for the Germans. We do not pretend to forgive them for what they did to us. Revenge is justice. They took our machinery and cattle, so we take theirs."

"But, I repeat, these people here are Poles, not Germans—
allies, not enemies."

"Wait, I say. When we arrived here, this was Germany. It has now been handed over to Poland. Our men do not understand foreign policies; they are taught to be interested in their local affairs. If it was proper to take a horse a week ago, why is it not proper to take a horse to-day? But there is a deeper reason. Do you know the Russians?"

"I have merely been to Russia."

"You are wise to say that, my friend! The Russian is a child, and it takes fifty years to understand him. By that time he is getting old. Remember, he is a child. I don't mean childish. He is very intelligent, but a child. That is why he is sometimes so naughty, and sometimes so lovable. Now, would you trust a child inside a sweet-shop? No. He would help himself."

"Now you know the story of Russia. Our standard of life under the Tsars was almost the lowest in Europe. We suffered shockingly in the first imperialist war. Then we set ourselves to begin again,

and to raise our standards. We made a good start, but we had not got very far before this affair started. Our material standards were far lower than yours——”

“You are the first Russian I ever heard admit that,” I commented. “Your official propaganda——”

“Official propaganda!” he sneered. “You have been to Russia, you said! You have seen. The real point was that our standards were rising. But first we had to concentrate on essentials—to cut out all luxuries. Thus, now our men find themselves abroad, they are like the child in the sweet-shop. The best child in the world would steal; he could not resist the wonders about him.”

“But the industrial achievements of the Soviet——”

“Don’t quote official propaganda to me,” he interrupted. “Our achievements were many, but I tell you that we concentrated on essentials. Yes, it is true that official propaganda painted Russia a heavenly land compared with the capitalistic Powers, but that was to encourage confidence in the régime. It was quite right. Ignorance is a legitimate weapon; it is quite proper to keep people ignorant if that helps your purpose—and, indirectly, theirs. But you are heading me from my subject—the Russian as a child. He steals a watch. You say: ‘Ah, that is because he never had a watch in Russia.’ True, he never did: watches are luxuries; a public clock is a necessity. But that is not why he steals the watch. He is a child, I tell you; he loves to hear the watch tick. It is alive, yet not alive. Is not that the outlook of a child?”

“Yes. Yet in some respects the Russian is very grown-up.”

“Maybe. But basically he is very young. He is sentimental. You can appeal to his emotion more easily than to his reason. When he saw the devastation in Russia he was furious. Now he demands revenge. He understands that idea, as a child would. It agrees with such political ideas as he has absorbed.”

“I have not noticed a great deal of sentiment among the Russian leaders!”

“Of course not. Otherwise they would not be where they are. Their task is to capitalise the emotions of others. They have only one objective—the welfare of Soviet Russia. Nothing else matters.”

“Not even the Russians?”

“Of course not! We are all part of our economic machine——”

“I do not agree with you.”

“That is immaterial. We are. That is where you have so often misunderstood us. You pretend to move by ethical standards, and are hypocritical. We do not pretend. When we want anything we get it. We have lost heavily in this war, but we have very nearly regained the frontiers of the old Russia.”

“Yes—and by hypocritical methods!” I protested. “You

conquer a country, and then have it vote itself into the Soviet Union. I don't want to be offensive——"

"You are not. We prefer straight talk."

"Look at the way you incorporated East Poland and the Baltic States. Quite apart from the rights and wrongs of your claims, the plebiscites were fakes."

"Maybe. But we got what we wanted. And you can't do anything about it. You can't fight us——"

"We don't want to fight you."

"You couldn't if you did. We have too many friends in England—in every country, for that matter. They will do as we wish—we can always get at them. You cannot get at our people. That is our real strength."

"I do not believe that. The strength of Russia is more securely founded—at least, I hope it is. You had plenty of friends in Germany, but they could not stop Hitler from attacking you. The power of nationalism is stronger than you realise, maybe. But if you are so sure that we can never attack you—and in that I agree that you are right, though from a different viewpoint—why are you so suspicious of everything we do?"

"The suspicion is of old standing. You supported the reactionaries who tried to smash the revolution——"

"Just a minute. Did you support General de Gaulle?"

"Of course."

"Did it never occur to you that our action in 1917 was similar? The Bolsheviks proposed to make peace with Germany, as Pétain and Laval did in 1940. Men like Koltchak and Wrangel were prepared to fight on. We were more interested in keeping Russia as a fighting ally than in political theories."

"I have never heard it put like that before. I shall think over your point of view."

"I agree that the suspicion caused, or deliberately engendered, led to disaster. Everything that everybody else did was misunderstood. Then your pact with Hitler in 1939——"

"That was certainly misunderstood. Yet I have given you the key to our policy. We think of Russia. We owed you nothing."

"But you owed something to yourselves," I suggested. "If you had lined up with us in 1939, there would have been no war."

"I do not agree. It would only have been postponed. The German military machine was poised to strike: it aimed at complete world domination. Its blow could be postponed or diverted, but not cancelled. The first blow would not be important—in Germany the reserves are always more powerful than the initial striking force. Our aim was to divert the first German blow to the west. If the Germans and the Western Powers had exhausted each other, we could have dealt with Germany at

will. That was one objective. Another was to gain time to strengthen our forces, for defence or attack. And we did not trust you."

"I can well understand the basis for the lack of confidence, but it was mutual."

"Maybe. Suppose we had made a pact with you, and halted the war. Hitler, foiled in his approach to us, but determined on world domination, would then have turned to you? Can you deny that there were elements in your Government which would willingly have made an alliance with Hitler against us?"

"No, that is true. But there were more who would not. Our objective was peace, not to make war on anybody."

"And our objective was defence. Our plan worked well, on the whole—no plan ever works exactly to plan, so to speak. We have had to pay a huge price, but we have won. You exaggerate our suspicion to-day. We know that we hold the whip hand. But it is all part of the policy. It makes you jittery. A jittery man makes concessions, not the man who knows his mind and states it firmly. Your policy wobbles—so it is easy for us to bend it to our way. This election of yours—tell me, why is Churchill no longer your leader?"

"Well, the opposition party polled more votes."

"Yes, but why did Churchill allow the opposition? We were very disappointed in him. This man Bevin, he is an enemy."

"That is not true. You are contradicting yourself. You accused us of wobbling. Now Bevin states our policy firmly, you say that he is an enemy. That is absurd."

"He is not realist."

"If by that you mean that he is not prepared to take what he wants, regardless of the rights of others, then he is not realist. But if you mean that he is a fancy dreamer, that is absurd. His feet are firmly on the ground, as you will find if you try to push him."

"The rights of others! So you are a humanitarian! If you believe in your cause, you cannot consider the rights of others."

"And yet, if the world is to be at peace, it can only be achieved by co-operation."

"We are not very good at co-operation. In a battle there can only be one general."

"Your policy of isolation between wars cost you a great deal—including this war. If you come out into the world, you will be welcome—but as a co-operator, not as a commander. If you try to impose your will, you will rouse the conscience of the world."

"No. It does not exist!"

Some of the points discussed call for comment: they have a direct bearing on Polish-Russian relations.

The Russian officer was right to stress that animosity between the races is not one-way. There is no love between Russians and Poles. The only happy Russians I met in Poland were those who by the fortune of Service requirements found themselves in soft jobs and enjoying good food. The others wanted to get home. They did not pretend to like the atmosphere of Poland. The doctrine of universal brotherhood is very fine until you find yourself billeted on your brothers.

The conversation revealed one aspect which had occasioned much discussion. As my friend said, the Soviet Government concentrated on the supply of essentials, and it was right to do so. It took office at a period of confusion, and was left with the shattered remnants of a backward economic system. It is a popular anti-Soviet device to claim that the Russian standard of life is lower than that under the Tsars. This is absurd. Once I went into Russia through Bessarabia, which had been Russian until 1918. Even superficially the rise in standards was quite apparent.

Colin Clark, the Australian economist, has made some interesting experiments in the comparison of material standards of living. Taking as his basis the American gold dollar, he has worked out for each country an "International Unit" based on real wages, i.e. wages proportionate to purchasing power. The Russian figure in 1913 was one of the lowest in Europe, 306. In 1921 it was at the poverty-starvation figure of 117. Then it began to rise. In 1923 it was 185. Over the years 1925-34 it averaged 320; by 1937 it was 379.

From the point of view of the ordinary Russian, this was excellent. He could see and appreciate his rising standards. What he did not know was that most other European standards were considerably higher, and were also rising. The British figure, for example, was 966 in 1913 and 1,275 in 1937.

His ignorance of this fact was an understandable part of Russian policy. The first objective was to win confidence in the régime, and one of the methods was to decry everything that happened in "capitalistic-imperialist" countries. Before the war my Russian acquaintances were friendly, but quite incredulous when I attempted to describe British conditions. How could my opinion count against the considerable efforts of a propaganda machine? It was backed by the fact that so few Russians could go abroad to see for themselves. It would be quite absurd, for example, for a British government to attempt to persuade its

people that material living conditions are higher in Britain than in U.S.A. Tens of thousands of British have been to U.S.A., and would give the lie to any such statement—which would also be contradicted by ideas spread by films, books and radio.

But now millions of Russians, for the first time, have been abroad. They have seen the cities of Western Poland, Germany, Austria, and Hungary—where average standards are considerably higher than at home. This applies to most rural districts too. One Russian soldier put it to me well: "I hate the Germans more than ever. They had these lovely farms, and yet they tried to steal ours."

Earlier in the war I had encountered conjecture on this point. What would be the result of this sudden acquaintance with other countries, whose conditions gave the lie to propagandist ideas?

In many Russian units in the Oder region the reply took a very strange form—a rumour that men who had seen the German cities and farms would never be sent back to Russia, lest they should spread the news. Instead, they were to be sent to colonise new areas in Siberia. The rumour was unfounded, of course, and may have been of unfriendly origin, but the fact that it was so widely accepted did indicate that the comparison between the Russian and foreign conditions had had its effects.

The Russians are unlikely to allow it to disturb their official policy. They will more probably point out that they had to dissipate an over-large share of the national income on defence, that now standards have been lowered by the war, but my estimate is that they will announce even bolder five-year plans: first to recover from war devastation, then to move towards higher standards of life.

Conversely, the impact of the Russians on the outside world has done little to favour the Communist cause. Their propaganda has been very expressionistic, and has been accepted almost idolatrously by their foreign supporters, so that contact with the reality has been something of a shock. No army in the world could ever live up to the standards set for the Russians by their apologists, including foreign Communists. When perfection has been preached, anything less proves disappointing. My Russian friend said with disgust that the Poles despise the Russians. This, speaking generally, is true: the Poles look down on the material and especially on the mental standards of their "guests." Even humble peasants complained, not only of the morals, but of the manners of their Russian equivalents.

I have argued that even a friendly army can easily outstay its welcome. The sooner the Russian army retires from Poland, the better for Russian-Polish relations. Weeks later I was teasing a Hungarian Communist friend on the poor showing of his party

in the elections. "What could you expect?" he demanded. "Your newspapers seemed to assume that we had the Russian Army behind us. So we had—like a weight tied round our neck."

Another point is of major importance. "You can't fight us. We have too many friends in England," the Russian had said.

It is perfectly true that no British government, under present conditions, could lead the country into war with Russia. Despite the considerable change in popular outlook, whereby the emotional admiration of Russian gallantry has gradually been submerged under suspicion of Russian foreign policy, Russia has ample friends to sabotage any British war effort. But, as I had insisted, nobody in Britain wants to fight Russia, or anybody else, for that matter.

Yet, in its turn, my friend's assertion prompts three considerations. First, the position of Communists in other countries. The question came out into the open as a major issue in France in November, 1945, when General de Gaulle refused to appoint Communists to the key posts in his Cabinet on the grounds of their doubtful loyalty or dual loyalty.

The French Communists were indignant, but had only themselves to blame. Like their fellows elsewhere, they had, up to August, 1939, been fierce in their denunciation of Hitler: then, after the German-Russian Pact, they had suddenly changed round, and become a serious liability. They redeemed their reputation as valiant fighters in the partisan movements—but not till *Russia* had been attacked by Germany.

The Comintern had declared quite openly that all Communists must accept its orders, even though they might be members of parliament who had sworn allegiance to the constitutions of their own countries. This followed Lenin's direction: "A Communist must be ready to do anything, to make sacrifices, and, if necessary, to use every possible deceit, fraud, illegal method, silence and concealment of truth." If this be accepted, no subsequent action is hypocrisy: any agreement can be signed and broken. My Russian friend emphasised that his Government considered only its own cause, and was not troubled by ethical considerations: the cause was the only thing that mattered. This understood, Russian policy becomes clear—and can be forecast. But the Communists of other countries still have to make it clear whether they are Russian agents or not. This is likely to become a major issue.

Later, a Russian politician argued with me that the "sphere of influence" in Eastern Europe was akin to Britain's relations with the Dominions. I pointed out that at the San Francisco Conference, for example, the Dominions frequently voted against Britain, but the Communist-dominated satellite States *always* voted with Russia. When, on a major decision, local Communists

oppose Russia, the world is more likely to believe that they are free and independent agents.

Polish Communists were very emphatic that they were Poles. I put a difficult question to a Cabinet Minister: "Suppose the Russians did something very unpopular; suppose they seized another slice of Polish territory. Would you move?"

"That is a poser," he smiled. "If I didn't move, the Poles wouldn't like me; if I did move, the Russians wouldn't!"

The second consideration is certainly of enemy origin, for it is commonly encountered in Germany itself: the idea that sooner or later Britain and U.S.A. will unite to fight Russia. I encountered it in many corners of Poland, a pathetic and despairing last hope for the obtaining of ultimate justice. The idea was fostered from most unexpected directions. The wife of an important Communist official in Poland told me that the B.B.C. had broadcast a suggestion to this effect, and hedged when I asked for date and time. She was only an unquestioning gossip, but the man who started off the story had a purpose in view, for nobody in Poland wants war: or, of course, in Britain, U.S.A., or Russia. This irresponsible talk is a great disservice to the cause of peace, and heightens suspicion which is the greatest curse in Europe to-day. The adage "Where there's smoke, there's fire" still has many adherents, but is right out of date when a smoke-screen can be deliberately laid.

"We can always get at the local Communists: you can't get at our people," the Russian had said. There he was right. Yet the problem is perhaps not so hard as it seems. There is no method by which outside countries can get at the minds and ideas of the Russian people. On the other hand, we have only to convince the dozen people who direct Russia's foreign affairs, and they will do the rest.

The third consideration is unfortunate. It is true that Russia has many friends scattered about the world, but she has also many opponents. She herself has contributed to their number by her actions. People looked to Russia for a lead towards a New World: instead, apparently, she favours old ideas of power politics. Maybe even her hold on her friends is not as firm as it was: there is a growing realisation that a man can be a very good Socialist and yet disagree with Russian foreign policy.

It will be noted that my friend's remarks were entirely "realist"—though they included no mention of the atomic bomb! Yet his final phrase was the most significant of all—the conscience of the world "does not exist." Admittedly it does not function very actively, but I do not believe that he was right. If he were, then I would have few hopes for the future of the world. Even if men of authority *think* that he is right, then the prospects are not

encouraging. We must set ourselves to prove that he was wrong.

III

The new western frontiers of Poland can only be held with Russian backing.

It is absurd to expect that the Germans will ever accept them as final. A subservient government may be installed by the Allies which will sign a solemn treaty agreeing the frontiers, but the signature will not be worth the ink with which it is written. It will be repudiated by the first German government which sees a chance of repudiating it—irrespective of the political creed which the government may profess.

Mr. Truman and Mr. Bevin have both suggested that the Poles were pushing their frontiers too far west. The Polish reply is: "We did not select these frontiers; we would have preferred our own. Russia, Britain and America settled the shape of the new Poland—imposed the Oder provinces in place of the lost eastern half of Poland. But, if we cannot have our historic regions like Lwow and Vilno, at least we shall cling firmly to the compensation you have allocated to us in the west."

I met Poles who argued that Russia had deliberately encouraged Poland to bite over-deeply into Germany so as to emphasise her dependence upon Russia and to induce friction between Poland and the Western democracies. Against this must be placed the fact that Russia herself has seized a slice of German territory, and patriotic Germans will yearn as passionately over Königsberg as over Stettin. Thus any German move for revision of frontiers will affect Russia as directly as Poland. The Russians are unlikely to miss a point like this. The territorial settlement could only be imposed upon a completely subdued Germany, and can only be maintained with a completely subdued Germany. This elementary fact is likely to prove more important than the spate of words, pledges and treaties which the next few years will inevitably produce. No German government which genuinely accepted the settlement could expect to survive. At the same time, Poles and Russians will be determined to maintain it. This involves, therefore, the necessity of holding Germany down for an indefinite period. There are, of course, plenty of other good reasons for such a course.

Long before the Germans are in any position to raise effective protest, all their people will have been evicted from the Oder-Neisse provinces, and Poles settled there. Every successive year will make the Poles more determined to retain their "compensation," but generations must pass before there is any possibility of German acceptance of the situation. In addition to the millions

from Poland, 3 million Germans from Czechoslovakia and 1 million from Hungary and the Balkans are likely to be crowded into the rump Germany. Already its agricultural resources have been severely depleted by the ravages of war and loot: it could only maintain a livelihood for its people by a vastly increased industrialisation—which has been expressly forbidden by the Potsdam Agreement. To make the situation worse, her late enemies are naturally claiming huge sums from Germany by way of reparations. That is why I suggested that millions of Germans are likely to die.

Whatever their words may be, Poles and Russians are committed to a policy of permanent German impotence—and it has our tacit agreement. This may have wide implications in the years to come. It means, for example, that if Britain and U.S.A. withdrew from Western Germany, Russia would have to march in. Nor would it be enough for Russia to impose a Communist government in Germany. No party which accepted the Oder frontiers could ever expect popular support. Do we realise exactly what we are doing? The policy made to-day may have to be enforced to-morrow: at least we should be quite clear as to our objectives.

Britain and U.S.A. agreed at Potsdam that the Polish administration should take over up to the Oder-Neisse. This was a tacit agreement to the new frontiers. If we did not propose to recognise them, the only honourable course was to have said so at the time, and not wait until hundreds of thousands of unfortunate Polish families had been planted there.

To-day it is already too late. I can see only one possibility of a change in the Potsdam scheme. The Poles have lost their city of Lwow, and have gained the German city of Breslau. I met no Pole of any political complexion who would not willingly exchange the German city of Breslau for the Polish city of Lwow—even though it would involve the re-transfer of thousands of settlers, they would be happy to make the trek again.

Such a course might reduce Poland's western advance to the Oder and the *eastern* Neisse, and would have a considerable effect in Germany. It depends entirely, however, on the recession of Lwow to Poland, and this in its turn depends largely if not entirely upon Russian policy.

The Russians are well aware of the sturdy patriotism of the Poles. Tsarist Russia included many peoples incorporated by force, but in the Revolution only Poland, Finland and the Baltic States were able to recover their independence. These had always been Western in their outlook, and had always resisted any attempt at Russianisation. The secession of Poland and Finland was eventually accepted by the Bolsheviks, as their geographical position made them non-essential to the Russian State—within

which, however, it was vital that Ukraine should be included. These geographical considerations are unaltered.

I believe that the Russians are sincere when they claim that they want a friendly Poland. But friendship cannot be imposed. Historical prejudices still rankle; and no one can pretend that the events of 1939-45 have brought the two races closer together. Yet the Poles are an emotional people. Even at this stage, one act of generosity or justice—like the return of Lwow—would have tremendous repercussions.

In brief, the question is whether Stalin will revert to the policy of Lenin, who always urged most generous treatment to the Poles—not only on the grounds of racial justice, but because the Poles had been fellow sufferers under the Tsars. He constantly emphasised “complete liberty” for Poland, and, had his policy been followed, relations between Poles and Russians would have been far happier than they are to-day.

The main line of demarcation should be reasonably clear. The Russians are entitled to say to the Poles: “We seek security. It is vital to ensure that you do not attack us, which we agree is unlikely, but also to ensure that you are never used as a potential spearhead of attack by some outside and greater Power: this is not so unlikely.” The Russians are not entitled to say: “In the interests of our security we shall insist that your government is subservient to our wishes.”

At the moment the Russian policy towards the establishment of a friendly Poland is moving but slowly. Their domination is unquestioned, but this in itself does not imply friendship—often the reverse, in fact. Yet I repeat that one major act of generosity or justice might have surprising results. There is an old adage which the Russians might remember: “To make a friend, you must be one.”

THE NEW POLAND

I

POLAND HAS SHIFTED WESTWARD. In the East she has lost 69,860 square miles, and in the West has gained 38,986. The 1939 area of Poland, 149,274 square miles, has now been reduced to 118,394.

The population, allowing for war casualties, will likewise be reduced, from 35 million to about 25 million. It will, however, be completely free from those minorities which were such a disturbing feature of the interwar years. We have already examined the fate of the Germans. The small number of Ukrainians left in Galicia are being transferred to the East in exchange for Poles. Some went willingly enough, but others—especially those who had compromised themselves in Russian eyes by espousing Ukrainian Nationalist ideas—resisted, in some cases forcibly. In Eastern Poland, indeed, Ukrainians add to the “bandit” problem; thousands of Nationalists are at large, terrorising a considerable countryside. At one period two Polish army corps had to be sent to the region to deal with them. Every section of Polish opinion is agreed that the aim should be a racial Poland, completely cleared of any dissident elements.

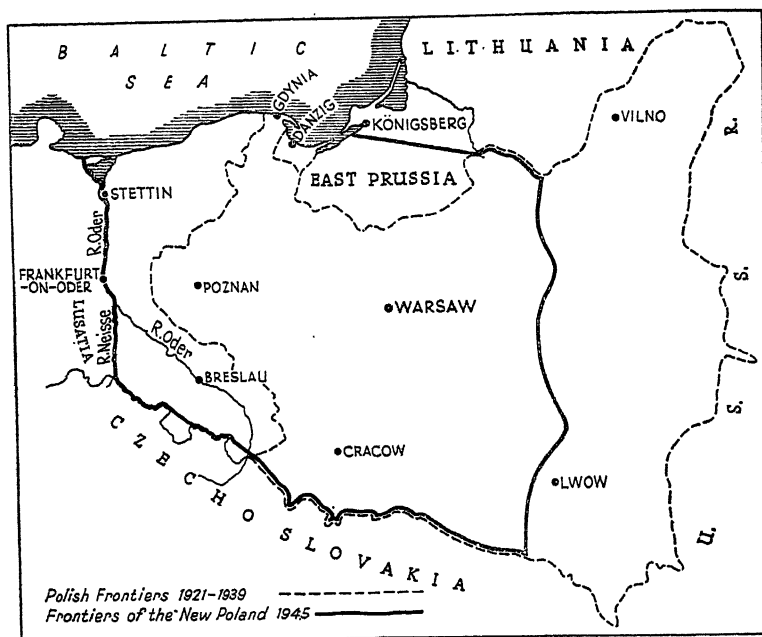
Although the devastation of war and Russian reparations policy have limited immediate advantages, taking a long-term view we may state with assurance that the new Poland could be more prosperous than the old. Industrially, at least, her losses are outweighed by her gains.

She has lost two-thirds of her production of crude oil—a very minor rectification of the frontier would restore this: it is trifling to Russia, but valuable to Poland because of its advantageous situation near the Central Industrial Area. On the other hand, she has gained several modern synthetic oil plants, and large deposits of lignite necessary for this industry.

Poland's mineral gains are very important. In 1938 she mined 38 million metric tons of coal: in the same year the newly acquired territories mined 31 million metric tons. Even before the war Poland was exporting nearly 10 million tons of coal a year. The figure is likely to be greatly increased, and may even be trebled. With German industry severely limited, it is likely that a considerable quantity will go to Russia—though most Poles hope for

better terms than the exchange of 45,000 German prisoners for 4 million tons of coal. Exports to the Scandinavian markets will increase, and the British export trade to these regions will encounter even sharper competition.

Poland's zinc production was important—108,000 tons annually, representing 6.5 per cent. of the world output. With Silesian zinc available, this will now be trebled. Another important gain will be electric power. Poland has lost some of the modern and costly plants installed only a few years ago, but gains extensive



German establishments. Against losses of 211 million kw.h. can be placed potential gains of 2,609 million kw.h.

At the moment to make any accurate comparison of gains and losses in general industries is impossible, but certainly the gains far outweigh the losses. Except for factories in cities like Lwow and Vilno, eastern Poland was predominantly agricultural. Now, in addition to the plants of Upper Silesia, she has acquired the considerable industries of Breslau and Stettin and their neighbourhoods.

Agriculturally, too, Poland can look to considerable gains. She has lost very extensive forests, especially valuable because only

a modest capital was essential to their working. Although there were stretches of rich black earth in the south, the general tendency in the eastern provinces was towards sandy soil—save in the Pripet Marshes, where agriculture could be only desultory. The Oder territories are not the most fertile of German provinces, but on average are better than those which Poland has lost, if only because of the much higher efficiency of their working. If this can be maintained, the ultimate outlook is good. Based upon statistics for 1938, the following comparison is interesting. (The figures quoted are in thousands of quintals.)

	<i>Polish Crops in 1938</i>	<i>Losses in the East</i>	<i>Gains in the West</i>	<i>Possible Total pro- duction.</i>
Wheat .	21,719	9,563	9,975	22,131
Rye .	72,534	20,487	27,636	79,683
Barley .	13,713	4,981	8,155	16,887
Oats .	26,565	9,886	17,614	34,293
Potatoes .	345,582	114,341	139,851	371,092
Sugar-beet	31,624	4,209	20,102	47,517

The figures quoted in the last column are unlikely to be attained for many years. They depend upon the complete re-settlement of the new territories, the repair of war damage, and the replacement of agricultural machinery, and the efficiency of direction of labour.

There is a real chance for Poland to achieve a balanced economy. I have frequently referred to the over-population of her rural areas. Now that all the large estates have been expropriated, there still remain 2 million peasants without land, and hundreds of thousands of others have minute holdings which can never yield a real livelihood. In all calculations, too, allowance must be made for the natural increase of population, averaging more than 400,000 annually. A considerable proportion of this surplus labour can be absorbed in the farms of the new provinces: the rest will be needed in the Silesian factories. The ultimate Polish ambition is a balanced economy with agriculture and industry as approximately equal partners—an economy which yielded admirable results in Czechoslovakia.

Another gain deserves special emphasis. Before 1939 Poland's access to the sea was restricted to the narrow strip miscalled the "Polish Corridor"—the "Polish throat" would have been a sounder name. Now Poland has an adequate seaboard of more than 200 miles, with three major ports—Danzig, Gdynia and Stettin. At present they are under Russian naval control and their dock resources seriously depleted, but when they are restored to

full working order they will solve many of Poland's commercial problems.

A commission of Soviet experts estimated that Poland had lost in the East investments to the value of 3,500 million dollars, but had gained in the West 9,500 million dollars. This made no allowance for the industrial equipment removed by the Russians, mostly from the Oder provinces before the Potsdam Agreement handed these over to Polish administration. I have seen no official declaration of its value. One Soviet estimate was 500 million dollars, but Poles—and Germans—put it much higher. There is obviously much room for variation in the valuation of machinery on the site and arriving in Russia in scrap-iron condition. Even assuming a figure as high as 1,000 million dollars, however, the Poles still have an adequate balance on the credit side. It is, however, potential rather than actual. It has to be put into use and developed before it has any value at all.

Yet I am convinced that it can be done. No one who has witnessed the Polish achievements in Upper Silesia would doubt their capacity to use their new prospects to the utmost advantage. It will depend largely upon outside help whether the results are achieved early or late.

Taken by and large, then, Poland has made considerable potential economic gains, and in 1959 may be much more prosperous than she was in 1939. This will depend upon the courage of the Poles, the resources available for development—and the assumption that the gains from Germany are permanent.

Those who consider that every human interest is economic will therefore find much in this section to alleviate their pangs of conscience about the fate of Poland. Yet prosperity does not inevitably spell happiness: I would recall to the economists my first encounter with a settler—the peasant woman who was very much better off, but who wanted to go back home. She was very typical of the Polish outlook—which, however, may change with the passing of time and the rising of a new generation.

II

The most urgent problem of the new Poland is neither political nor economic, but moral and ethical.

In the Western democracies moral standards have fallen during the war—and were not conspicuously high before it began. Individuals who have seen the use of force legalised by States apply it to their own concerns. That best guide of life, "Consider thy neighbour as thyself," never had fewer practical adherents in an age where most men base their lives on selfishness. Nor have States set a good example: far too often they have declaimed

pledges and principles, to abandon them at an opportune moment. Confidence is the essential basis of a moral code.

The position in an occupied country like Poland can well be imagined. For more than five years it was patriotic to rob, to steal, to cheat, to kill. The young people, especially, were brought up on these ideas: "If you see a German, rob him. If he is alone at night, kill him and throw his body into the river."

It is much easier to begin such a line of conduct than to stop it. The guns which disturb the nights of Warsaw are not only those of Russian deserters, Vlassov or otherwise. Tens of thousands of young Poles were engaged in the resistance movement; in the ranks of the Home Army they performed innumerable feats of gallant daring; they have learned from friends and enemies alike the power of force. Not all have the moral courage to halt and reason.

The youths and girls of Poland are not quite normal—this especially applies to those of Warsaw. The strain of underground war is intense, even to youthful nerves. It was the younger section of the population which was called upon to bear the heaviest burden. In the towns, especially, 95 per cent. of the population of all social classes was involved in resistance. Youths shouldered the responsibilities of grown men—and lived forty-eight hours in twenty-four. Now their brains and bodies are of different ages.

Save for the overwhelming urge to freedom, every aspect was demoralising. The Poles were always conspiring against authority: unethical methods became good when directed against the Germans. Now the Poles have to rebuild, not only their ruined cities, but the things of the spirit—to re-educate themselves to a sense of values.

The present circumstances all combine to make the path to moral recovery difficult and arduous. Practically all Poles object as strongly to Russian domination as to German—and some know only one way of expressing their disapproval. The free election of a Polish government should have a beneficent effect upon this aspect of the problem.

It is complicated, too, by the economic situation. I have related how the government, in a gallant effort to arrest inflation, froze wages, but could not entirely control prices. Man's first instinct is to live, and, until prices are brought down by adequate supplies, it is almost impossible for a man to live honestly on his wages. I would have classed the Poles as a reasonably honest people, but to-day workmen steal and clerks take bribes—justified, they claim, by sheer necessity for bare existence. Others profiteer on the misery of their fellows: with these, any British government would be far sterner than that of Poland.

The economic complication adds to the difficulty of arousing

social consciousness in the youthful section of the population. The Germans put Polish children to work at the age of twelve: they earned wages, and shook themselves free from parental restraint at far too early an age. Now they are activated by the motive of self-profit, which is a natural continuation of wartime outlooks of self-preservation. A skilled mechanic, working long hours in a government factory, may earn 300 zloty a week. His son, aged fourteen, who pedals a cycle-taxi about Warsaw or who engages in non-productive marketing, can make considerably more than 300 zloty a day. The effects on outlook, ideas and behaviour can be imagined.

One night I shared a room with a well-known Polish writer who had rendered gallant service with the Polish Armoured Division in France. He had flown over with me, and now experienced the inestimable joy of meeting his wife and son after a gap of six years. Yet I found him troubled.

"Think of it!" he said. "My little boy's first question was: 'Daddy, have you brought your gun?' When I said no, he was obviously disappointed. 'Oh, Daddy, I dream of guns, lovely guns!' He is nine—and he dreams of lovely guns! Then he said 'Daddy, have you brought any manuscripts with you?' Again I disappointed him by saying no. 'Oh, what a pity! Mummy told me that you sold one manuscript for 3,000 zloty. So, if you had brought ten manuscripts, we could have made 30,000 zloty. Then we could have gone to Breslau and bought Leica cameras, and smuggled them here—and we could have sold them for 100,000 zloty.' What shall I do, my friend? The two dominant ideas in my little boy are lovely guns and Black Market speculation!"

Parental discipline and influence are at their lowest in war. One-third of the men of Poland are separated from their families. Add to this the collapse of education during the German occupation, and the severe restriction of the powers of the parish priest. In any case, teacher and priest have been among the leaders of the Polish revolt against the foreign oppressor—that is, they have as a patriotic duty encouraged youth to work against authority.

The sad fate of Warsaw adds to the general demoralisation. The national life of Poland was centred in her capital, and now the capital is destroyed. The Poles to-day are a population rather than a nation, but they are determined to regain their old standing. Hence the importance of reorganising the country and its people on a traditional basis of Polish ideas, which the people will understand and respect. Since the Government holds a monopoly of propaganda, it carries a grave responsibility. If it exploits its power for the furtherance of imposed political objectives, while neglecting ethical standards, then the new Poland will not be a happy place to live in. The creed which the

Government preaches depends upon decent human behaviour for its success, but this cannot be attained by Government decree.

The mental disturbance of the war years has left innumerable effects. Poles find it difficult to get into the habit of looking ahead when for years they have lived for the moment. "We have lost our sense of responsibility," they said. "Take no thought for the morrow" has been our motto. The more a man saved, the more he lost. This temporary outlook is hard to dispel—and is not good for the mind."

I have said that the low moral standards of governments has helped in the general decline. We have preached high-sounding principles of justice, and then promptly reverted to power politics. A current Russian comment was quoted bitterly all over Poland: "If Mikolajczyk had come to Moscow earlier, he could have had Lwow"—that is to say, if he had realised that the Allied promises were unlikely to be fulfilled, and that Russian power was to be the basis of settlement, he might have secured a fairer frontier for his country. The Poles argued that if Lwow were Polish, it should belong to Poland whether Mikolajczyk went to Moscow or not, and there was bitter comment on the lower morality of international dealings. This inevitably tends to encourage low standards in private life.

All over Europe the moral problem is only too obvious. One advantage of Poland over some of its neighbours is that it is recognised: I have recorded a girl's pleasure at wearing a frock which was not stolen, and I found her attitude common among all Poles who have stopped to think. Yet the return to morality is bound to be a long and patient process. Before we can render aid, we have to restore our own ethical standards.

III

One reason for the courage of the Poles in facing so boldly the reconstruction of their country lies in having done it before.

We have seen the Poland of 1919; devoid of reparations, and instead burdened with war and relief debts; inheriting the confusion of three different sectors long accustomed to foreign rule; denied outside help in reconstruction; completely devastated by war, and emerging in hopeless confusion. The situation to-day could never be worse, and in some respects is better.

And Poland did fight her way out of the chaos of 1919. She established a centralised control out of the sectional fragments: she reconstructed her communications, making them Polish instead of Russian, Austrian and German: she made the most of her industrial resources, and effected a considerable land reform: she built up a social service system comparable with that of any

of her neighbours, and given a period of peace was well set towards reasonable prosperity. The Poles have no cause to be ashamed of their progress during the interwar years.

It is possible to foresee the probable course of Polish action in many spheres—always provided that it is unimpeded by foreign influences. Of primary importance is the land question.

It can be assumed that the parcellation of the large estates is final, since it represents the predominant wish in Poland. If majority opinion is allowed to prevail, however, the former owners will be given modest compensation—at least the return of their personal possessions, and the maximum holding of 125 acres. Some of these men were very clever and enterprising farmers: Poland needs such men very badly, and cannot afford to drive them into unemployed boredom, where they will become centres of anti-government activity: nor, since Poland wishes to retain her reputation for Western civilisation, can they be “purged” or eliminated in Eastern fashion.

Some of the troubles of the peasants to-day need only be temporary—the lack of machinery, seeds, fertilisers and livestock. Nevertheless, the hard times which appear inevitable for the first few years could be used by clever propagandists to lead the peasants towards experiments in collectivisation. So long as it were done by methods of reason, this might be a forward step. The peasants would be likely to resist more forceful measures.

Similarly, since peasants never did like requisitions, and the present Government levy of a quarter of farm produce at low prices is unpopular, the reaction in some political circles might favour a “liquidation” of resistant peasants. In Poland this would be a disaster—and, I believe, a failure. The man who stood up against Tsars and Führers is not likely to be intimidated by his own people.

I have conceded—indeed, have emphasised—that to the Polish peasant pride of ownership ranks above mere economic benefit. Yet, faced with modern mass production methods, the 10-acre family farm offers few prospects beyond a bare livelihood. Polish agriculture needs drastic reform.

With great advantage, the Government could send representative deputations of peasants to Denmark. This little country displayed an amazing resiliency in the face of adversity.

A hundred years ago Denmark was primarily a wheat-producing country. Then, in the 1870's, Europe began to draw huge quantities of grain from the vast fields of America. Prices fell to one-half: European farmers, quite unable to compete with the mass-production methods of the prairies, were ruined. In many countries—including Britain—agriculture never recovered from the blow.

The Danes simply re-orientated their policy. Wheat commanded low prices, but bacon and butter were in demand. Thus the entire agricultural system was switched over. Farmers continued to grow grain—not to sell disastrously on the world market, but to feed pigs and cows. In a very short time the change had been successfully completed, and Denmark prospered.

It is true that the Danes enjoyed one important advantage—a short sea journey away was England, an industrial country needing huge quantities of food.

The Poles had already made some strides along the same path. Two of her obvious markets were almost closed—Russia, by the Soviet self-sufficiency policy, and Germany, by political obstruction. However, by 1939 Poland had already built up a considerable export trade in bacon and dairy produce—not only with Britain, but with U.S.A. and Spain. This is capable of very great expansion. Germany is likely to remain a closed or poor market, but Russia appears as if she is about to emerge into the world of trade, to the advantage of all—assuming, of course, that it is to be normal commerce, and not a method of economic domination. The British market for foodstuffs is likely to remain important and open, and reciprocal trade between the two countries could be considerably extended.

There is another comparison between Poland and Denmark. The Danes, too, have always resisted the idea of communal farms, and to-day 94 per cent. of Danish farmers own their own land: their average holding is, however, far greater than the Polish—70 acres against 10. But over 92 per cent. of the Danish farmers are members of a co-operative society.

Danish co-operatives cover the purchase of seeds and fertilisers, the marketing of eggs and milk, the manufacture of butter, cheese and bacon, and their sale. The societies are democratically run, and are very efficient. In addition to their economic facilities, they offer technical advice and education.

Because of the co-operative activities and the specialised products, the standard of life of the Danish farmer is three times as high as his Polish fellow.

Again it is a question of development rather than of agrarian revolution. The Poles had already begun to adopt the Danish farm system: pig production increased between 1929 and 1939 by 60 per cent., and a change-over in breeding was made from the lard type of hog to the bacon type: similarly, cattle-breeding was adapted to dairy purposes. Polish tinned ham was accounted excellent in that land of connoisseurs, U.S.A., and its export increased five-fold.

At the same time the co-operative system was widely extended. It had been known in Poland for generations, but not until the

country was free did it begin to prosper. In addition to the normal trading facilities, the co-operative societies handled the grading, packing and sale of eggs, the curing and export of bacon, and the tinning of ham.

The world is not safe for the little man: it ought to be, but is not. The peasant cannot stand alone, and prosper: he must combine with his fellows; and he must learn to produce what the purchaser wants, not what he himself favours.

This will demand a considerable educational advance, and M. Mikolajczyk did well when he set aside estates as agricultural colleges and experimental farms. The first objective is obviously the replenishment of the war losses—a colossal task. Even while it is in progress, keen attention should be given to modernisation of methods. The Polish peasant has much to learn in how to fertilise his land and to use machinery—this could only be owned on any considerable scale co-operatively. The State could reasonably undertake the direction of agricultural research—immediate subjects of importance are the improvement of crops, livestock and soil. Next, or simultaneously, would come the advance of rural amenities, especially in housing and electrification. Here again Poland could learn much from Denmark.

Once Poland has regained the position of 1939, however, the outlook would be favourable. The final parcellation of the estates will put an end to the “temporary” atmosphere which pervades a country still in a process of agricultural evolution, and the addition of the Oder provinces should help to balance the range of farm products. At the same time, the new industrial potential of Poland should absorb large numbers from the over-populated rural areas, and subtract considerably from the hidden unemployment which did so much to lower the Polish standard of life.

Poland was never over-generously supplied with agricultural technicians. Her allies could be generous at comparatively small expense—by the loan of professors and instructors from their agricultural colleges, and by the allocation of places in these for Polish students. A thousand young Polish farmers in each of countries like U.S.A., Canada, Russia, Britain, France, Denmark and Sweden, and the whole outlook of Polish agricultural thought might be altered within a generation.

I should look for a great increase in Polish agricultural prosperity within twenty years—always provided that peace is maintained and that Poland enjoys real freedom. These are both vital. Happiness may come with economic advantages, but production is often directly related to happiness. The Polish peasant would never be happy as a slave to any foreign-imposed

system, however beneficent its intent. And he is a sturdy resister: I would far rather work with him than against him.

IV

Next in importance to agriculture in the new Poland is industry.

We have seen that the incorporation of Upper Silesia very considerably increases the Polish potential, and that the gains in the Oder territories far outweigh the losses in the east. Again the first objective is to recoup the losses of the war and its aftermath. This applies especially to machinery.

Here arises a point of very great importance. Apart from the inevitable losses of war, and the deliberate destruction of every factory in Warsaw, the machinery in the provinces acquired from Germany was freely removed by the Russians prior to the Potsdam Agreement. In conversation with Russians of rank, I found no suggestion that any of it was likely to be returned.

There was considerable apprehension among the Poles about reparations. They recognised, like the Russians, that the Versailles system was likely to produce little or no result if applied again, so were anxious to get their share of Germany's capital assets.

A clause of the Potsdam Agreement read: "The U.S.S.R. undertakes to settle the reparation claims of Poland from its own share of reparations." Details were then given as to the Russian share in reparations from the Western Zone.

Now it is quite obvious that, great though the booty transported to Russia from Germany may be, it can never replace the huge losses Russia incurred during the war. What share, then, will be allocated to Poland? There was a suggestion that it should be 15 per cent. of Russia's total, but this has not been confirmed. Further, some Polish ministers appeared apprehensive: would Russia say, "You have the mines of Silesia and the farms of Pomerania—those are your reparations." The Poles emphasised that these assets were not reparations from Germany, but compensation for the Polish territories acquired by Russia.

There is a case for the limit of generosity here: from U.S.A., whose territories were untouched by the war, and whose losses in comparison with resources were small; from Britain, whose losses were heavier, but who escaped German occupation; from Russia, where losses were heavier still, and who endured German occupation, as did Poland. There is an ethical case that reparations should be proportionate, not to replaceable material losses, but to suffering in the common cause. If this be admitted, the Polish claims are paramount.

The American loan to Britain, however, showed that the sentiment of wartime was vanishing rapidly, to be replaced by a business outlook. This is legitimate in a commercial loan, but not in the sharing of the limited spoils of victory. From every point of view, Poland can claim priority: morally, since she was the first to defy the Nazis; materially, because no other country endured such complete and total suffering.

To date there has been little sign of the materialisation of any substantial reparations for Poland. The Russians have made very welcome supplies of raw materials to get factories going again, but they have been on a business basis—payment usually to be made in the finished goods. The whole question of reparations needs urgent, detailed and precise clarification.

After the First World War, reparations were the cause of more argument, bickering and absurdity than any other subject. There was a clash of interests between Britain and France. Britain had accomplished her major purposes—German naval and colonial strength was destroyed, while Britain herself was intact. Thus her policy was against the complete elimination of Germany, her best customer. (Further, it would leave France in a dominating position in Europe!) The French outlook was quite different. The military power of Germany had *not* been eradicated: France was still menaced by a prospective revival of German strength, and had suffered great material damage. Thus, while British calculations on reparations were based on Germany's capacity to pay, the French claims were based on the damage Germany had inflicted. If they caused great hardship or bankruptcy to Germany, so much the better—the less the likelihood of the Germans making a second attempt. The British argument was that a serious decline in German standards of living would have unfortunate effects in all trading countries.

Profiting by the Allied discord, the Germans paid very little—a total of £1,038 million in cash or in kind, including payments made for the cost of armies of occupation. Against this, Germany and German industries obtained loans amounting to more than £1,250 million—loans which were not repaid, and which the Germans never intended to repay.

The Allies are not likely to make the same mistake twice. There were some influences in U.S.A. and Britain which still favoured a gradual and long-term payment of reparations, their rate depending upon Germany's "capacity to pay." Most countries, including Russia, decided at an early stage that this method was impracticable. The alternative was a rapid stripping of German resources. The argument was well-founded: since the Germans would never strain themselves to replace the machinery they had wrecked in Russia, let the Russians seize equivalent machinery

in Germany, and the Germans would then have the stronger incentive to replace their own. This argument is important, for it is an obvious truism that no nation will ever pay reparations willingly.

Thus Poland and many other countries are clear in their outlook. Polish industry shall be rebuilt by the transfer of German plants. Ruined communications will be repaired with materials delivered by Germany or collected in Germany. Agriculture shall be re-established by the confiscation of machinery and livestock from Germany. The Germans will not enjoy the process, but their sufferings will be trivial compared with those which they inflicted upon others. And at least the agony will not be prolonged. Experience has shown that only reparations exacted immediately after defeat can be effective.

There is nothing impracticable about this programme. The Germans themselves showed that it was possible to transfer complete industries from one area to another to escape Allied bombing. It is reasonable to argue that they can be retransferred just as readily to the territory of Germany's victims.

Some countries are building up huge totals of reparations to be demanded from Germany—just as France did in 1919. They are likely to be disappointed. It is quite impossible for Germany to pay for all the damage she has caused, whatever the form of coercion adopted. It may be true that the present method will produce far more reparations than that of 1919 onwards.

In effect, the 1919 method was to extract the largest possible amount of milk from the German cow: the 1945 method is to have the German cow in steaks. (Yet it is obvious that the two plans cannot be mixed, and the results depend entirely upon Allied co-operation in control. It is not possible to extract milk and steaks from the same cow at the same time!) Steaks may be more satisfying for the moment; but all demands cannot possibly be satisfied; that is to say, Poland's share of German reparations is unlikely to be anything like adequate to re-establish the country commercially and agriculturally. Thus Poland will certainly need a loan to finance her purchases of capital goods—mostly machinery—abroad. One looks almost automatically to U.S.A., but at the time of writing the Americans are apprehensive: they are very interested in Poland, but not in a Russian satellite. They are not prepared to underwrite Communism, especially if imposed from without. Until the political issue is cleared, and Poland is indubitably free and independent, U.S.A. may continue to look askance at the financing of the Polish recovery.

The outlook in Britain may be different. There are many uneasy consciences at the fate of Poland, and one way of assuaging them is by financial compensation. While Britain carried a burden

far heavier in comparison than that of U.S.A., and while her post-war reconstruction is far more difficult, she is still a powerful force in the economic world—and may recover her full strength more quickly than her rivals imagine. A loan of 50 million pounds is not large to British resources, but would be a godsend to Poland. As the money would be spent in Britain, the advantage would be two-way. Over a long term, under generous conditions for the first few desperate years, I believe that Poland could and would repay such a loan.

At present, through U.N.R.R.A. we have helped in the relief of acute distress in Poland. I saw something of the work of the organisation, and its principal fault was its insufficiency. Its second objective, after immediate relief, is rehabilitation. Here the field of need is vast, and has been only partially surveyed.

For the moment let us assume that our outlook is sufficiently wide, just, or even generous to secure the rehabilitation of Poland. This, indeed, is no more than elementary common sense, in our own interests as well as those of Poland. What of reconstruction and development?

The opportunities are many. I have suggested a balanced economy of agriculture and industry. First, the newly-acquired factories and mines of Silesia must be got back into working order. Then, or concurrently, the original idea of the Central Industrial Area must be pursued, while Warsaw regains its old position. New regions likely to see some industrial development are those near Danzig and Stettin.

The Poles are working on a ten-year plan of industrialisation up to the natural limits of the country's resources. It is quite practicable, but its pace will depend largely upon the capital available—the total sum needed will be very large.

Once the obvious tasks are completed—the reconditioning of existing factories—more ambitious schemes will be necessary. Trade depends upon good communications. The railways of Poland had to be re-planned when the Partition period ended; and now, to a more limited degree, the same problem has to be tackled again. A great extension of the communications between the industrial areas and the ports will certainly be necessary. Railways which the Russians converted to their own gauge for military purposes will have to be restored to the normal European gauge, and the vast losses of material replaced.

Since some Polish products, like coal and timber, are non-urgent in respect of time occupied in transit, the cheaper form of transport by water may be favoured. In our day we may see the junction of the Vistula River system with that of the Danube.

Another section of the plan has already been mentioned: the electrification of Poland, already set in hand before the war. With

the new resources available in Silesia, new and high standards could be attained. The ultimate Polish ambition is to extend electrification, not only to cover all industries, but as in Denmark to include rural farms. This will take time, and may well have to be postponed; yet in developing her towns Poland should be very careful that her villages do not suffer in comparison. The more the urban conditions gain in attractiveness compared with the agricultural, the more urgent Poland's employment problem becomes.

In one measure of reconstruction Poland will require no outside stimulus—aviation. Within a very short time of the Germans being driven out of Poland, a remarkably complete air service was established. It had to be drastically cut because of shortage of petrol, but it will certainly be revived. Polish air commerce will certainly rival that of any other European country, and may ultimately approach the comparative standards of U.S.A.

Concurrent with all these ideas of reconstruction runs one previously mentioned. Polish education has been at a standstill for five years: no class suffered more at the hands of the invaders than did the teachers. It was thrilling to see the immediate resurgence of the schools, once Poland was free. Even in Warsaw most children were attending school—the premises were usually ruined buildings hastily patched up, and often housing two shifts of pupils each day.

As in agriculture, so in industry, technical education was developing rapidly, but was virtually extinguished during the war. Now its rapid growth is vital to the new Poland. Nor is the situation desperate. Thousands of exiled Poles have acquired technical skill, and can play a useful part in the rehabilitation of their country. The Government has made it clear that it regards technicians as highly as does the Soviet Union. Yet, after mobilising all its own resources, Poland will be short of thousands of technicians. The more fortunate Allied countries have already provided many places in their technical colleges, but could do considerably more. We could loan instructors and skilled workers until the Poles were in a position to train their own. Such action would not be expensive, but it would reap very rich rewards—moral, if not financial.

V

Poland, geographically, is the central area of Europe, and her prosperity depends considerably upon amicable relations with her neighbours. The more forward-looking Poles envisage even closer bonds.

I have mentioned that in 1939, when Poland and Czecho-

slovakia were companions in adversity, they formulated plans for a complete economic and political federation. Committees were appointed to consider the innumerable details—for such a plan is easier to talk about than to implement. The idea was subsequently frustrated by Russian pressure on Czechoslovakia.

It has been revived by thoughtful men in both countries, and there are signs that Russian objections may be modified in course of time. The new potentially balanced economy of Poland will favour the scheme, for a complete federation between a strong industrial country and a predominantly rural State presents many difficulties owing to the variations in standards of living. The first moves are likely to be exploratory, but within a few years a firm basis of co-operation should have been established.

There is every argument in favour of Central European unity. The German ambition was always to keep the States weak and separate, so as to dominate them easily. If Russian foreign policy is to be implemented by "strategic frontiers" and "spheres of influence," then the same disunity is likely to be favoured, but if Russia moves as expected towards international co-operation as the best maintenance of security, then she is unlikely to object to combinations among her neighbours, which could never be directed against her.

While Germany and Russia were rivals in Europe, any move to this end was impracticable—it was this rivalry which led directly to the maintenance of a dozen small States in Eastern Europe. Now, with Germany impotent, there is a unique opportunity for furthering some scheme of federal union.

It is far too late for either Germans or Russians to attempt to impose a foreign way of life upon their neighbours, whose nationalist characteristics are sharply formed and distinct. Close and friendly collaboration is quite another thing.

An economic federation in Central Europe would be a boon. Founder members could be Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Hungary. From the military point of view, these countries alone, allied with Russia, could ensure that German military dreams could be dispelled at a very early stage. Politically, the union would add stability to Europe. Economically, the gains would not merely be shared by the federating Powers, but by all trading nations.

In my book, *The New Europe*, I argued in favour of regional federations as a first and early step towards a United States of Europe. The moment is ripe for the preliminary moves. People are more ready for unconventional action than some of their leaders imagine. Security is the principal aim of the common man.

The Central European Federation would have a population of

about 60 millions. No one country could ever dominate it, as Prussia dominated Germany—the larger population of Poland is countered by the more advanced industry of Czechoslovakia.

On the other hand, were Central Europe to remain a medley of small and quarrelsome States, no longer “enjoying” the uneasy protection of German-Russian rivalry, it would simply invite foreign domination. The dominant Power would inevitably be Russia. And most Central European States, while anxious for Russian friendship, have no desire to become Soviet satellites: nor do they wish to be dominated by the City of London or by Wall Street. To retain their independence, they must be prepared to surrender part of it.

Poland has strong economic and political ties not only with her immediate neighbours, but with the Scandinavian countries. The little States of Europe are anxious. They are not inclined to trust the Great Powers, with a long list of broken promises to their discredit. Unless the smaller countries can weld themselves together into some closer association, their outlook cannot be confidently founded.

VI

The practical necessities of the New Poland can be summarised:

(a) The establishment, at the earliest possible moment, of a democratic government, chosen by a free election in which all Poles may take part—including those who do not agree with the present régime. This presupposes complete freedom of political propaganda and organisation, which at present does not exist in Poland: and also the abolition of censorship and secret police. No form of democracy can exist concurrently with these. Will Crooks used to say that one of the Englishman's most precious rights was to go into his home and to shut the door after him.

(b) The creation of a police force recruited not on the basis of toughness, or on political or other convictions, but on character and good conduct. A political police can only command the respect of but one section of the population and automatically impels the animosity of the rest.

(c) The economic reconstruction of Poland, along the lines I have outlined.

(d) The development of Polish industry and agriculture. Its speed will depend upon the capital resources made available, either by reparations, or loans, or both. This applies especially to industry. In agriculture, technical education and the development of co-operative ideas are paramount. A balanced economy is vital to Poland.

(e) The finding of new markets for Polish products. If the previous Russian policy of autarchy is modified, this will be advantageous, but Russian and Polish products are so similar in character that other outlets for Poland are essential.

(f) If full federation is not yet practicable, a Customs union with the Central European States should be an early objective.

(g) The conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany. This is especially important to Poland, since the Oder-Neisse frontiers are only provisional. Until the shape of their country is finally determined, the Poles cannot rebuild with any security—a permanent edifice needs secure and undisputed foundations.

(h) Military security against a possible revival of Germany. Poland can never stand alone. The best move would be towards federation in some form with her neighbours, backed by Russia. Yet the first essential is a matter of Allied policy—to ensure that Germany shall never be in a position to menace smaller Powers.

(i) Every possible step for the moral and ethical rehabilitation of Poland. Solution of economic problems and respect for law will assist, but the process is likely to be long.

(j) Restoration and development of educational standards; complete tolerance in religion; widening of cultural as well as of economic relations with other countries; exchange of students; development of tourism; encouragement of an international outlook.

Yet all these things depend directly or indirectly upon Russian policy. If, as I imagine, this is dominated by considerations of security, then the situation is easier than it appears. Germany is the only European Power which could ever attack Russia by normal methods of warfare, and Russia is in an admirable position to secure the military impotence of Germany for an indefinite period. Thus a protective barrier of satellite States is now unnecessary. In any case, the strategic frontier lost its value with the coming of the bombing aeroplane, was disrupted by the flying bomb and the rocket, and completely demolished by the atomic bomb.

The political "sphere of influence" is equally out-dated—though it is still advocated in influential British circles as well as in Russia. "Spheres of influence" never yet led to anything but suspicion and conflict. The ordinary people of the world will demand something very much better—in some ways, their thinking is more advanced than that of their governments. In others, it is more parochial. In Poland I met not a single Russian who was in the slightest degree interested in rescuing the Poles from a "Fascist capitalist dictatorship," or in adding a few

thousand square miles to the millions which Russia already controls.

Poles of all political persuasions, including Communists, did not hide their anxieties. Some were very outspoken. The strategic frontier was now obviously an absurdity, and the Russians were never lacking in realism. Thus, if they persisted tenaciously in their policy of dominating their neighbours, it would not indicate a reasonable march for security, but the holding of bases for future aggression. In such case the outlook for civilisation would be dark indeed.

The only people who are pleased with the Russian 'satellite' policy are the remnants of Nazis and Fascists, who see in it a certain source of discord between Russia and the west.

It is a habit of the Russians to erect monuments to their achievements wherever they go. I found that the imposing columns of granite or plaster had no effect upon the Poles: they wanted justice, not monuments. Freedom is the finest memorial, and in the long run would assure to Russia the most lasting results.

Mr. Henry Wallace claimed that the twentieth century was that of the common man. Yet to date the common man has received less than justice nationally and internationally. Few thinking people would claim to be satisfied with the present lot of the small Powers of the world—especially with those of Europe. Uneasy consciences in themselves are no consolation to maltreated peoples.

The course of events in Poland suggests some possibilities.

(1) We may see an election on the Austrian or Hungarian pattern, as free as it can be in the aftermath of a war and with a dispersed population, followed by the formation of a new coalition. In this the Peasants and Socialists would probably be strongly represented, the Communists a minority faction. Such a government would pursue a moderate Socialist programme—at a faster pace than ours, because of the more urgent background.

(2) The election might be on the "single-list" system—a list of candidates prepared by the government. This method can take many ingenious forms, but the essential underlying factor is that the organisation operating it is bound to get a majority. Thus one could forecast the result before the election was held—the government would be Communist dominated, even if subservient parties held a proportion of its seats. (I have indicated that some of these parties might become independent—if allowed.) Such an election would not be recognised as

democratic by U.S.A. or, presumably, by Britain, and the result would be to throw the Polish government more firmly into the grasp of Russia.

As I write, intense pressure is being applied to Mikolajczyk to persuade him to agree to an arranged or "coupon" election. It is urged that a free election is bound to lead to internal strife, which would give Russia an excuse for marching in and taking over the country. This is a clever argument. Further, if Mikolajczyk eventually accepts it, he will almost certainly split his party. Perhaps this also is well calculated. In the meantime, several of his prominent supporters have been murdered in mysterious circumstances.

(3) An attempt may be made to carry out the second method disguised as the first. To this end the fictitious character of some of the present "official" parties would be preserved, while the "unofficial parties"—at present the Polish Peasants and Christian Democrats—would be deprived of most or all means of electoral appeal. The voting lists might be severely curtailed by the elimination of the names of "collaborators"—that is to say, opponents of the régime. All these things, and many worse, have happened in other elections in Eastern Europe.

(4) The Communist régime might be maintained in power by force for such a length of time that it would eventually be accepted by a majority of the people. This happened in Russia—but in Poland the accent would be on the words "long time," for prejudice would be heightened by the intense dislike of foreign domination. And the process could scarcely be described as democratic.

If the hopes of the democrats are fulfilled, and method (1) prevails, then my list of necessities quoted a few pages back becomes important. I have already indicated that present arrangements ensure Polish-Russian collaboration in foreign affairs, but this could be as friendly as that of Canada and U.S.A.

If democratic principles of election were scrapped, and a Communist régime were imposed against the Polish will, then the outlook would be troublous indeed. Such a régime could only maintain its power by force, and would depend upon Russia throughout. Polish opposition might develop to such an extent that in despair the government might apply for incorporation within the Soviet Union. I do not believe that this is the Russian wish: it is certainly not that of the present Polish Government, and is the very antithesis of that of the Polish people. But such ordinary folk as peasants and workers do not always get what they want.

I would not envy any régime the task of holding down the Poles by force indefinitely. The Tsars found them very indigestible, and the Polish character is unchanged. Nor would the tragedy be confined to Poland: the Poles have so many friends abroad, and I dread the possibility that they may become centres of anti-Russian organisations, potential disturbers of the peace of the world. They will never exist if justice is given to Poland.

We demand for ourselves the right to decide our form of government: we should not deny it to our friends. If they decide in favour of a political creed which is not ours, then that is their own affair, and we can respect their choice; but if that creed is forced upon them, we cannot accept the situation and still pretend to be democrats. If we adhere firmly to our declared principles, making it quite clear in advance that we intend to do so at all costs, then I believe that we can exercise a beneficent influence upon Polish events. I repeat Mr. Bevin's warning against dividing the world into devils and angels. There are Polish politicians to-day who adopt totalitarian methods because of the drastic needs of the day, but who may be willing to accept democratic processes when the situation is easier. I have given my personal opinion that these men are not puppets, but Poles, desperately anxious for the welfare of their own country.

And above all local and national considerations is the vital need for a long period of peace. Far too often has Poland been devastated by wars, usually of others' making.

Yet against the sombre picture which I have necessarily painted must be placed the spirit of the Polish people, undismayed by unprecedented tragedy, determined to rise again, and to rebuild the life of their country. The spiritual so often triumphs over the material.

In 1939 I wrote: "We shall know whether we have won the war we thought we were fighting by what happens to Poland." I see no reason to modify my opinion. Poland is the test case of Europe. The first to stand up to the Nazi tyranny, the longest in the fight, and the greatest in suffering, her reward to date has been scurvy indeed. Britain and U.S.A. as well as Russia have now to implement the many promises they have made. On different occasions Stalin has referred to his wish to see a "strong," "independent," "free," "democratic" Poland. Surely these are the minimum rights which the Poles could claim, but at the moment of writing not one of the adjectives could be truthfully applied.

This book has been written in strange places. Part was written in Poland, while the feel of atmosphere was strong within me. Part was deliberately postponed, lest emotion rather than reason should be my guide.

I wrote part of one chapter amid the ruins of Berlin—and another in Mussolini's newspaper office in Milan. Then, a few days later, I found myself ensconced in a lovely villa near Genoa. As I wrote under an orange tree, it seemed that my phrases rolled more sonorously than was normal. I commented on this to my host, the local British commander. He said: "No wonder. Churchill was the last man to occupy your room. You were sitting in his chair this morning."

I wrote several sections while actually flying over the chaos of Europe—and some in Paris, after my aircraft had made a forced landing nearby. One chapter was indeed cosmopolitan, for different sections were written in London, Edinburgh and Dublin. Now I complete the final chapter in my native Leicestershire village. It is Christmas Eve—indeed, by this time it is Christmas morning, and the church bells are sending their chimes over the frosty countryside.

I have just been listening to the midnight news from London. The preliminary report of the three Foreign Secretaries has been issued. I tune in to Moscow, where the comment is optimistic.

It may be that some progress has been made. At least the deadlock caused by the failure of the London Conference has been broken. Many other meetings will be necessary before the fate of Europe is decided.

Was it a conference at Moscow or a battle in the war called power politics? The meeting was at the initiative of U.S.A., anxious about conditions in the Far East. Will the Americans give in to Russian demands for Balkan domination in exchange for good terms in the Pacific? If this is so, then we have *not* won the war which we thought we were fighting. And has Britain attempted to secure her interests in Iran by sacrificing the liberty of Poland?

In Europe there is great uneasiness over the diversion of opinions among the Great Powers. Until Russia, Britain and U.S.A. are agreed there can be no real progress. I can see ample cause for disappointment, but none for despair. After the First World War, we plunged headlong into the League of Nations, not because we understood its implications, but because we were tired of war. Now we are moving more cautiously, but it may be that our progress is more certain.

I have discussed the problem with people as different as

Russians and Americans, and find one considerable ground for optimism. At least we are agreed upon our aim—the peace of the world, as vital to one as to the other. We disagree considerably as to the method of attaining it. Russia, at the moment, appears to distrust the international approach, and favours the fashioning of her own security; Britain and U.S.A. suggest alternative methods. Each may be right—any one of the three approaches might serve if all adopted it; or all might be wrong. So far the Great Powers have had a monopoly of major decisions—the minor States have been rather ostentatiously crowded out. Yet the big fellow seldom has the monopoly of brains. It may be that one of the smaller countries will suggest an approach better than the three big ones. Yet at least there is room for comfort in the fact that we are arguing about the means to an end, not about the end itself. If the situation were reversed, then indeed I would be in despair.

In this complicated world it is difficult for the common man to express himself. I have met him in many countries, and avow that he values peace higher than territorial aggrandisement or economic advantage. No British government could ever persuade its people to march to the conquest of Belgium; I doubt if even the Soviet Government could raise any enthusiasm for a territorial war against Turkey. If Mr. Bevin ever realised his Parliament of Mankind, its verdict on such topics would be emphatic. But in the meantime we have to deal with governments: and these, whatever their professed political creed, are generally both conservative and rapacious when national issues are concerned.

So, as the Christmas bells ring out their message of peace and goodwill on earth, reflecting the wish of the greater portion of mankind, I survey the sombre picture of the world after its first months of peace. In Germany there is chaos, accentuated by Allied disunity. The recalcitrant Germans are the only ones likely to gain from the clash of ideas. In Eastern Europe there is great apprehension: many countries have merely exchanged a dictatorship of the Right for one of the Left, and want neither. Especially deplorable and alarming is the anti-British campaign in the Russian press—apparently intended to provoke discord, at the very moment when understanding is vital. In Western Europe all movements towards consolidation have been blocked by Russian suspicion. Some people urge a policy of appeasement of Russia: others, remembering its disastrous failure with Germany, oppose it. In Germany itself the old democratic parties are encouraged in the western zones, but the Russians are attempting to force the Socialists into a subservient fusion with the Communists; this may be the prelude for a new battle for

Germany—and the Germans may be able to play off east against west. This arouses especial anxiety in Poland. Do the Russians plan to establish a Communist Germany? Will one of the bribes be part of the new Polish territory—say, the area between the Oder and Western Neisse? And will the Western Powers react to the Russian move by other bribes to the Germans, so that the melancholy events of 1919–39 will be repeated? Economic difficulties abound everywhere, among victors as well as vanquished. There is an uneasy situation in Iran, where a foreign-backed faction seems likely to disturb a delicate balance of influence, and to rouse many old suspicions. The Russian propaganda is making territorial claims on Turkey which, if pressed, are likely to be vigorously resisted. In the Far East there is every sign of a clash between American and Russian interests. China may be on the verge of a disastrous civil war, and in Indonesia there is actual conflict.

Within a few days the first meeting of the United Nations Organisation will assemble. At least it carries no exaggerated hopes, as did its predecessor. The common man was disturbed at the wrangling over vetos at San Francisco, and at the manner in which international promises have consistently been flouted. Outlook in the U.N.O. differs from country to country. The Americans see in it the first move towards a United States of the World: this is a popular view in Britain. The Russian government, however, appears to envisage the U.N.O. as a meeting-place where the Great Powers will impose their will upon the smaller countries. These outlooks can only be reconciled by the exercise of much tact and patience.

The common man is most uneasy about the “spheres of influence” into which the world is slowly being divided. At the best, they can only give to the world an uneasy truce: at the worst they could plunge the world again into conflict. Further, the policy is one-sided: the Russians have already built up a sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, but object strongly to any similar move in the west. The policy of conciliation adopted during the war years appears to have failed. Britain and U.S.A. then accepted many Russian demands apparently under the fear that otherwise Stalin might make terms with Hitler—always a most unlikely event. Britain, for example, apparently abandoned her interests in Eastern Europe to safeguard those in Greece and Iran, while U.S.A. was more interested in the Pacific. Neither country is now happy about the outcome of the bargain.

The situation is unhealthy as well as uneasy. When we abandon principles we always have to pay the price. However, no problem is insoluble given a basis of confidence. This, indeed, is the real key to the making of the new world order. Europe has long been

submerged beneath clouds of evil; they have now receded, but have left in their wake a fog of suspicion—which can be more distorting than open enmity: a trifling obstacle can be magnified into a frightening menace. Assuredly our first task is to clear away this fog.

We cannot merely sit down and wait for a wind to disperse it. When the R.A.F. found that fog was interfering with their operations, they took prompt action. Clever brains thought out an idea, astute minds translated it into practical form; then men and women in the factories stamped out and assembled the components; finally, the finished product was handed to the care of a capable staff, who got it to the right place at the right time. Thus F.I.D.O. solved the problem of fog-bound airfields.

Our immediate aim is a European F.I.D.O. It will demand clever brains and hard work before it can be handed over to the control of a United Nations Organisation. Nor can all the work be handed over to mysterious bodies called governments: it must be accomplished by ordinary people. Unless we are prepared to give as much attention to foreign affairs as to football pools and ball games, we are heading for disaster.

Above all, we must stand by our principles. In theory, no difficulty arises—all the United Nations, for example, have accepted the Atlantic Charter. Now we have to apply it. Wavering on principles inevitably leads to moral disaster; we cannot compromise with evil. If the Russian satisfaction with the Moscow Conference means that we have abandoned our principles, then there can be little cause for rejoicing; if it means that the late allies have accepted the need for continued unity of purpose and action, then the prospect is bright. The Christmas message is of peace and goodwill, but the first cannot materialise except on the basis of the second. Indeed, the historic message of Christmas is "Peace on earth to men of goodwill."

Our work is international and domestic. We have to convince Russia that her suspicions are groundless—and, as my Russian general emphasised, this will never be accomplished by subservience, which normally does no more than stimulate further demands. The Russians have to convince us that a signed agreement means what it says, and will not be controverted by indirect activities—and that her interests in Eastern Europe are defensive, and not aggressive. We have all to admit that a war of nerves and fear is as immoral as domination by force. We have to establish international justice on a high and recognisable plane: and we might well begin with Poland.

At home, we have to rid ourselves of the habit of putting all the blame on the other fellow. Limited vision and selfish apathy

rather than wickedness have been our principal failings. Our own responsibility for the world's illness is high.

There was a man whose daughter was backward in geography. One day he saw in a newspaper a map of the world; he cut it out, then tore it into irregular sections, jigsaw fashion, and handed it to his daughter to reassemble.

To his surprise, she completed the task very rapidly.

"It was very easy," she explained. "On the back of the map was the picture of a man, so I put him together. Thus, when the man was right, the world was right."

